

Resolving the Design Challenge for National Electric Vehicle Sweden

A comparative study on how insiders and outsiders perceive the brand style of Saab

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Before starting my MA Thesis, I had little knowledge of Saab. In this case, I would like to give my special thanks to Eero Miettinen, from whom I was inspired to conduct this project which turned out to be a very interesting one. My greatest thankfulness goes to my academic supervisor: Oscar Person who always gave proper suggestions whenever I felt frustrated, yet highly respected my own thought. I would also like to express my gratitude to all of the participants who shared their thought and experience about Saab. It would have been impossible to draw out the conclusion without their help.

Summary

ii

In the history of automotive design, there are few brands that have successfully managed their design legacy over time. Most brands have either lost the track of their original character, or failed on meeting consumers' expectations. Saab is one of the cases. Starting from 1948, Saab had steadily developed a niche position in the market, reaching its summit in the 1980's. However, its brand reputation and market share started to decline after merging with the General Motors in 1989. After nearly 20 years of mismanagement by GM, Saab had felt on meeting consumers' expectation; and lost track of both its unique brand identity and design legacy. The company eventually declared bankrupt in 2011.

In 2012, after a lot of speculations, Saab was bought by National Electric Vehicle Sweden AB (NEVS). The new owner is planning to introduce an electric vehicle by 2014 based on the current 9-3's platform. With the brand being mismanaged in the last two decades, the identity and its design is unclear as a result. It is urgent to restore consumers' confidence about Saab. In doing so, NEVS need to resolve a multi-faceted design challenge: To understand how consumers perceive the brand identity of Saab, what directs their interests to the style of Saab; and how this knowledge can be utilized when designing new products.

In this MA thesis, I investigate the design heritage of Saab and outline recommendations for how NEVS can capitalize on it in future models. I conduct an in-depth study on the brand style of Saab with insiders (Saab designers) and outsiders (Saab fanatics and regular consumers). The overall objective is to compare and understand how insiders and outsiders perceive Saab's brand identities in different models and how these conceptions potentially can be used in developing new models under the Saab brand. In the study process, I exemplify the complexity involved (1) in carrying out stylistic analysis of a brand and (2) in achieving universal recognition for a brand style.

Contents

i	Acknowledgement	30	5 Identifying the Saab style
ii	Summary	31	5.1 The markers of Saab models
06	1 Introduction	32	5.1.1 The iconic models
07	1.1 Background	34	5.1.2 The anti-iconic models
08	1.2 Objective	35	5.1.3 The ambiguity models
09	1.3 Thesis structure	36	5.2 The competitors of Saab
11	2 Saab History	37	5.3 The valuable Saab heritage
12	2.1 Svenska Aeroplan AB (1948–1969)	38	5.3.1 Capturing the concrete attributes
14	2.2 Saab-Scania (1969–1989)	42	5.3.2 Capturing the abstract references
15	2.3 General Motors and Investor AB (1989–2000)	44	5.4 Conclusion
17	2.4 General Motors (2000–2010)	46	6 Recommendations
18	2.5 Saab-Spyker Automobiles (2010–2011 Bankruptcy)	47	6.1 Short-term goals: Reestablishing Saab's design icon
20	2.6 National Electric Vehicle Sweden (2012–)	51	6.2 Long-term goals: Improving Saab's product portfolio
21	2.7 Conclusion	54	6.3 Developing electric vehicles in China
22	3 Studying a brand style	55	6.4 Overview of recommendations
23	3.1 General understanding of styles	57	7 Discussions
23	3.2 Style associate with brand	60	References
24	3.3 Styles study on automobile	61	List of Tables & Figures
25	4 Method	65	Appendices
26	4.1 Data collection		
26	4.1.1 The interviewees		
27	4.1.2 The questionnaire and material		
28	4.2 Data analysis		

CHAPTER 01

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background	07
1.2 Objective	08
1.3 Thesis structure	09

1.1 Background

Saab had its unique design approach, incorporating technologies which clearly distinguished it from other automotive brands. In the early years, Saab was designed by a group of aircraft engineers. Different from any other car maker at the time, Saab applied manufacturing procedures from the aerospace industry to vehicle production. For instance, the monocoque body structure (a structural approach that supports loads through an object's external skin^[ii]). In 1978, Saab incorporated the turbocharger technology to the

Saab 99's engine, from which they invented the first turbo-charged engine for use in a car. However, while the brand had developed a unique position over the years, its brand reputation started to decline after General Motors (GM) took ownership of Saab in 1989; a story that eventually ended with the company's bankruptcy in 2011.

Many articles point out that GM is responsible for the demise of Saab. For example, as described by Urquhart: "Saab is a really brilliant brand. It's probably one of the biggest brand mismanagement stories in the history of the automotive industry^[iii] p.13." This mismanagement of GM is also visible in terms of design. For instance, the 900 and the 9-3 class stand as the design icon of Saab. The 9-3 series was meant to renew the 900 series. However, it is difficult to associate the classic 900 (1978) with the 9-3 2nd (2002).

After a period of great turbulence and uncertainty, Saab was sold to National Electric Vehicle Sweden (NEVS) in June 2012. The new company is owned by a Hong Kong-based energy company^[iv]. The company is now attempting to develop pure electric powered vehicles under the Saab brand. In doing so, a key question for NEVS is what to do with the design heritage of Saab. In particular, how should NEVS style future models to make best use of the rich design heritage of Saab?

Figure 1.1-1



The monocoque-structural 92 was stamped out of one piece of sheet metal and then cut to accommodate doors and windows. It's drag coefficient is same as the Porsche 996^[ii].

Saab 92 (1949)



Porsche 996 (1998)

Looking into the reports of Saab's later era, its market share had dropped sharply. Even the most loyal fans of the brand have lost their faith to GM-Saab; and the regular consumers have no longer felt confidence to this brand. As such, it is clear that the defining characteristics of Saab need to be carefully considered because the brand cannot endure further damage to its reputation. To this end, a study into what constitute the defining design attributes of Saab is timely and much needed for NEVS.

Figure 1.1-2



There are few similarities between the classic 900 and the 9-3 2nd even though they are the same serial.

Saab 900 (1978)



Saab 92-3 2nd (2002)

1.2 Objective

This study identifies Saab's valuable design legacy and exemplifies how its style can be used in designing new models. Saab was linked to distinctiveness and innovation but has over the years turned out to be something uninterested and only existed in the history. Why so? How did it lose its market advantages? What are the consumers' expectations? Could NEVS profit from the original Saab heritage? To reveal answers to these questions, I set out the following objectives to tackle in this MA thesis:

- *To clarify how the style of Saab is perceived by different stakeholders.*
- *To identify the iconic design legacy of Saab that recycles in its style, from which NEVS can build future models.*

In realizing these objectives, based on Person and Snelders's "Brand Styles in Commercial Design" (2010) and Stacey's "Psychological Challenges for the Analysis of Style" (2006); I conduct a style study on Saab's products to define the characteristics of Saab as well as its brand identity. These studies have led to a notion that styles are recognized differently depending on one's knowledge and interests^[iv]. Therefore, I will also exemplify the complexity inherent in the assessment of style studies.

The overall objective is to outline recommendations for NEVS, from which I will (1) suggest the focus points on designing new models in the near future, (2) present the strategy on extending Saab's product portfolio over a longer period of time and (3) explain the opportunities for NEVS in developing new markets for the brand.

1.3 Thesis structure

09

Figure 1.3

Chapter 1	06	Introduction
Chapter 2	11	Saab History
Chapter 3	22	Studying a brand style
Chapter 4	25	Method
Chapter 5	30	Identifying the Saab style
Chapter 6	46	Recommendations
Chapter 7	57	Discussions

The figure illustrates the structure of my thesis, which consists of 7 main chapters. In chapter 1, 2 and 3, I provide the background knowledge for this thesis. In chapter 4 and 5, I present the methodology, procedure and results of the study. In chapter 6 and 7, I provide recommendations for NEVS and give further discussions on extending the current study.

The thesis is organized as follows:

In chapter 1, I give an introduction of the thesis, including (1) the basic design challenge NEVS is facing, (2) scope of the thesis, (3) the expected outcome and (4) the structure of thesis.

In Chapter 2, I provide an overview of the Saab history. It shows how the products have been developed from 1949 to 2012 and how different developments are associated with the changes of owners. From this the reader should be able to (1) understand the relationship between Saab and its owners; (2) identify the changing styles of Saab's vehicle design; (3) realize the challenges facing NEVS today in terms of design and brand style.

In Chapter 3, I turn to the literature on brand styles. The overall objective is to explain the importance of style recognition associated with a brand identity. In this chapter, I discuss: (1) How are styles recognized? (2) Why is style important to a brand? (3) What are the challenges when conducting studies on styles in the automotive industry?

In chapter 4, I explain the methodology for research and data collection which include: (1) How the interviewees were recruited. (2) How the questions and materials were selected. (3) How the data was collected / analyzed.

In chapter 5, I analyze the interview data; dividing it into three major themes. (1) The important Saab models: This topic is aiming on clarify

the design icon of Saab; in other words, what makes a vehicle being recognized as a Saab? (2) The Saab competitors, from which it is possible to reflect the company's advantages and disadvantages. (3) The valuable Saab heritage: The third topic is furthermore divided into 2 aspects which are (1) The tangible heritage and (2) the abstract references, from which Saab identities will be explained in detail. By comparing these themes, I outline the important design legacy of Saab, as well as the varied interests insiders and outsiders have in the brand.

In chapter 6, building on the previous data, I provide recommendations on (1) how NEVS could adapt Saab design legacy to its new products as the short-term goals, (2) how to make best use of previous efforts to translate the brand identity on extending Saab's product portfolio in the long-term.

In the last chapter I open up the discussion about the contribution as well as the limitation of my study. I also suggest possible applications and directions for future research on brand styles in design.

CHAPTER 02

SAAB HISTORY

2.1 Svenska Aeroplan AB (1948–1969)	12
2.2 Saab-Scania (1969–1989)	14
2.3 General Motors and Investor AB (1989–2000)	15
2.4 General Motors (2000–2010)	17
2.5 Saab-Spyker Automobiles (2010–2011 Bankruptcy)	18
2.6 National Electric Vehicle Sweden (2012-)	20
2.7 Conclusion	21

The ownership of Saab has changed over time; its brand identity has also changed with different owners. In this chapter, I (1) show the developing history of Saab, (2) explain the models' design under different ownership and (3) describe the market reaction to different Saab models.

In outlining the history of Saab, I summarise the main arguments brought forward by Holweg & Oliver on the business failure of Saab; extending it with more design and product specific information from Wikipedia, and discussions about Saab on forums and blogs.

2.1 Svenska Aeroplan AB (1948–1968)

Saab (Svenska Aeroplan Aktie Bolag) was established in 1937. Its original purpose was to produce military aircraft for the Swedish Air Force ^[ii]. However, the demands for fighters vanished after the World War II. To keep the factory operating, two new departments were formed inside Saab: One continued its original carrier but turned to civil aviation instead of fighters. The other came to develop vehicles ^[iii].

The first Saab vehicle project (project 92) was started in 1945 ^[ii]. The outcome was named as the Saab 92 and went into production in December of 1949. Its exterior design was very aerodynamic for its time. The monocoque-structure (a form of body structure that is used when making aircrafts ^[ii]) made its drag coefficient astonishingly low even comparing to modern vehicles.

The 92 was redesigned in 1955 and introduced as the 93, in which the Saab's "trapezoidal radiator grille" was first introduced ^[ii]. The 93 evolved into the 95 in 1959 (Saab's first estate car) and the 96 in 1960. Both models remained in production for nearly 20 years. The 96 made

the brand internationally known because of its safety innovations and the successes in the international motor rallies. It was the first model being widely exported outside Sweden. Nearly 550,000 examples were sold by the end of its production in 1980 ^[iii].

After 20 years without launching a new sedan, the 99 was unveiled in 1967. Its innovative concept included unique features such as wraparound windscreen, self-repairing bumpers, headlamp washers, hockey stick and side-impact door beams ^[ii]. The popularity of 99 and its breakthrough of Saab's usual appearance had made it an iconic model of modern Saab. A "combi-coupe" (hatch back) version was added to the 99 series in 1973. Over time, this body style becomes one of the best recognizable design attributes of Saab in the future.

Figure 2.1-2 puts together the classic models and compare them with the aircraft. From the figure, we can see a strong linkage between the models and the air plane. The bubble shape design (monocoque-structure) has always associated Saab's vehicle directly to their aviation career which made the "aircraft heritage" become one of the best-recognized identities of Saab.

Figure 2.1-1



Every model in this era was designed by Sixten Sason. He used to design aircraft for Saab throughout World War II. After the war, he became the chief designer of Saab's vehicles. During his long career (1939-1967), Sason introduced many of the iconic design elements of the brand; his work has brought to company's reputation for iconoclasm, ingenuity and quirkiness that still inform Saab's design legacy today^[v].

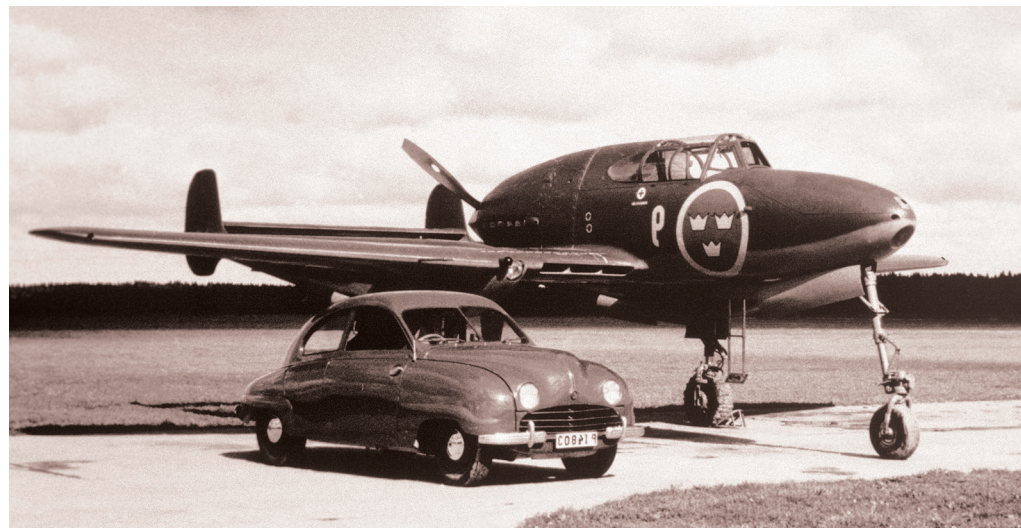
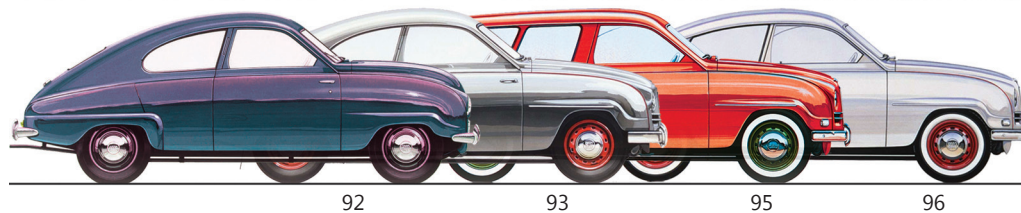


Figure 2.1-2

The monocoque structure had made the aircraft heritage one of the most important identities to Saab's vehicles.



4. Saab 96 (1960)



5. Saab 99 (1968)

1. 92 is the first Saab model. Its body structure was applied from aviation industry.
2. 93 first introduced the Saab's trapezoidal radiator grille.
3. 95 is the first estate Saab model.
4. 96 made Saab well-known globally because of its successes in motor rallies. The picture presents a facelift version that has a closer grille design to the modern Saab.
5. 99 is the last model designed by Sixten Sason. Its breakthrough of Saab's design legacy has made it one of the best iconic Saab.

2.2 Saab-Scania (1968–1989)

In 1968, Svenska Aeroplan AB merged with Scania-Vabis (a commercial vehicle manufacturer in Swedish, specialize on heavy trucks and buses^[iii]). Saab's vehicle department became an individual company: Saab-Scania. Benefit from the new company, Saab was able to produce its own engine by using the facilities from Scania-Vabis [vi] (The early-produced Saab 99 was using the Triumph engine, imported from UK^[viii]). In 1977, Saab adapted Scania-Vabis's turbo charge technology into Saab's engines. It became one of the earliest turbo-charge engines for a regular automobile.

The 900 was introduced in 1978 to replace the 99 series (originally introduced in 1968). Adapting with a plenty amount of signature attributes such as the black panel (a function that extinguish most instrument panel lights to eliminate distraction during night driving. The darkened instruments will re-illuminate themselves when they

required driver attention^[viii]), curving front windshield, and the turbo-charged engine. The 900 became the most well-known Saab internationally. Nearly one million 900s were produced from 1978 until 1994, making it Saab's best-selling and most iconic model^[iii]. An anonymous blogger state several reasons why the 900 is so beloved: "The crazy engine layout, the eccentric wiper sweep pattern, the key in the floor and those massive bumpers which could destroy a battle cruiser upon impact are all key factors that summarize a classic Saab^[ix]."

To reduce development costs, Saab, Fiat, Lancia Thema and Alfa Romeo joint a development program on the "type four platform"^[x] in the 1980's. Yielding from the agreement, the 9000 was introduced in 1985^[iii]. It is classed under luxury car which showed the company's ambitious on making large vehicles. The model was not received

Figure 2.2



Saab 900 (1978)



Saab 9000 (1985)

1. 900 is the best-selling model through Saab's entire history. Nearly one million models had been produced from 1978 until 1994.

2. 9000 is the first executive car of Saab. It shared its plate form and some parts with four other companies which brought a lot of limitation to the body design.

2.3 General Motors and Investor AB (1989–2000)

15

well in the market. Part of the reasons was because the four companies had made their model (which was developed from the same platform) look too similar with each other, as well as targeting similar market segments. However, it is still a breakthrough for Saab in terms of extending their product portfolio.

In this era, the Saab's chief designer was Björn Envall. He joined Saab in 1969, working alongside with Sixten Sason on the Saab 99. Envall played an important role toward the final stages of design when Sason was too ill to devote to the project. He was responsible for the 98 Prototype, 99, 90, 900, 9000 and EV-1 concept car. His most notable achievement was the transition of the 99 (1968) to the 900 (1978) ^[xi].

In 1989, General Motors invested US\$600 million together with Investor AB ^[iii], making Saab a half subsidiary of GM. However, a conflict between the need to achieve economies scale through GM's portfolio and the need to maintain Saab's brand distinctiveness soon became a serious issue during GM's ownership ^[iii].

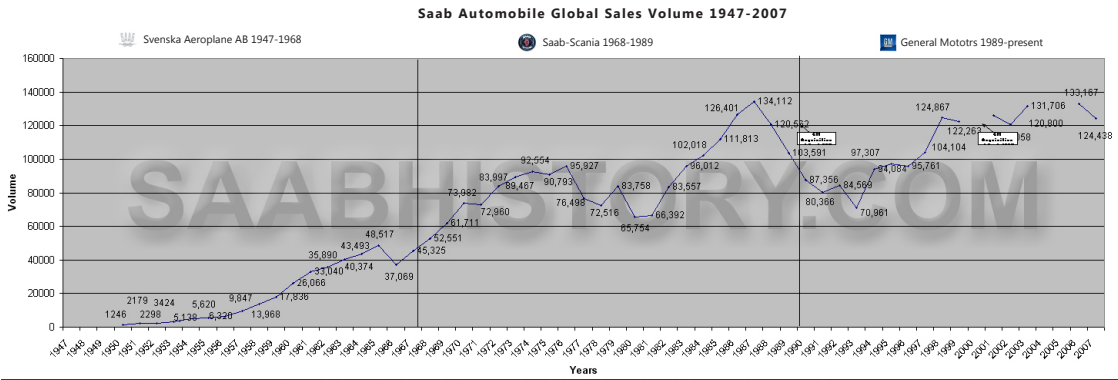
The second generation 900 was launched in 1994 which was developed from the same platform as Opel Vectra (GM2900 platform). This model was poorly received due to its problematic platform. The 900 2nd who shared Vectra's platform was also dealing with the similar problems: "It handled clumsily, suffered alarming quality lapses and was later reported to have done poorly in Swedish crash testing ^[iii] p.9". Thus, 900 2nd marked the turning point for the decreasing of Saab's reputation.

Though the initial sales volumes were encouraging, the company was still facing high costs on product development ^[iii]. In 1996, GM and Investor AB invested a further US\$524 million into Saab to support a five-year recovery plan. The plan had involved the replacement of 9000 (1985) and 900 (1994) ^[iii]. The new generation 9000 was launched in 1997, renamed as 9-5. It was also developed from the GM2900 platform. Like the 900 2nd, the new 9-5 had similar problems on performance experience, safety issues and its quality ^[iii]. Shortly after, 900 2nd (1994) received a facelift and renamed as 9-3 in 1998. Though GM claimed that over 1,100 improvements were made ^[ii], 9-3 still failed on rebuilding Saab's reputation due to its "anti-Saab" performance.

From 1989 to 2000, Saab's reputation had decreased sharply; however, the evidence did not clearly show on the sales numbers (see figure 2.3-1 at page.16). From my viewpoint, there are two probable reasons for this situation: (1) Saab was first introduced to GM's market (ex. Asia) which Saab took an advantage on being an individualists' choice in the

new market. (2) The need of personal vehicle was growing globally; which had improved the sales accordingly. The un-confidence about Saab was indirectly indicated from forums and magazines. For example, "the British 'Which?' magazine placed the Opel Vectra as one of the least liked vehicles in its class and found it to be 'dogged with reliability problems' [iii] p.9." The 900 2nd (1994), 9-5 (1997) and 9-3 (1998) were all built on the same platform which had made these models been recognized as problematic models as well as Opel Vectra.

Figure 2.3-1



The figure presents the sales volume of Saab from 1947 to 2007.

Figure 2.3-2



(1994) Saab 900 2nd



(1985) Saab 9000



(1997) Saab 9-5

- 1. 900 2nd marked the turning point to Saab. Its poor quality and anti-Saab performance had seriously damaged the company's reputation.
- 2. 9-5 was revised from the 9000. Because of its problematic platform, the new 9-5 did not received well.

2.4 General Motors (2000–2010)

17

Though the sales volumes had increased, Saab was still in red. Due to this, Investor AB decided to pull out in 2000. They sold its 50% stake to GM for a quarter of the original price when GM had invested for Saab 10 years ago ^[iii].

In 2003, Saab's engineering department was merged with GM's European operations. 1,300 engineers and designers lost their place in this merger. This announced that Saab had no longer able to develop its own vehicles ^[iii]. Meanwhile, the 1998 version 9-3 was been radically renewed. It was designed mainly by GM's European subsidiary Opel. The most significant change was that: The 9-3 2nd dropped Saab's iconic hatchback in favour of a more conventional four-door approach ^[iii]. At this point, Saab almost lost its original

design legacy but a few elements were still remained.

To extend Saab's portfolio with smaller vehicles and SUV, GM approached on "badge engineering" (an application of one marque's brand to another company's products ^[iii] p.10) to reduce the cost of developing new product. There were only two models that had been produced as badged-engineering Saab: (1) The 9-2X was a re-badged Subaru Impreza which only received lightly modify in front and behind. (2) The Saab SUV 9-7X was developed from Chevrolet Trailblazer which again only redesigned its face

Figure 2.4



1. 9-3 2nd was mainly designed by Opel. Comparing with the previous sample 9-3 1st, the new model radically changed the design legacy of Saab.

2. GM tried to extend Saab's portfolio by introducing the 9-2X and the 9-7X; however, both models received critical comments and were soon pulled out of production.

and tail. Both models received critical comments from press and Saab's consumers in terms of design. They were soon pulled out of production a few years after ^[iii].

By the end of 2005, there were nearly eight brands carried by GM. Some of the major shareholders started to push GM for reform, including the disposal of Saab ^[iii]. In 2008, the financial crisis forced GM to place Saab on "strategic review" and put up Saab for sale ^[iii].

On 16 June 2009, the Swedish sports car maker Koenigsegg announced their intentions to purchase Saab from GM. Behind the bid, it was a consortium of Norwegian investors with unspecified support from China ^[iii]. Due to the fact that once Saab's technology has been taken by the Chinese investors, they may threaten GM's market share in China. The bid was broken in the end because of GM's concern.

From my point of view, it would be a match merging if Koenigsegg had combined with Saab. Both companies have a strong association to the aircraft. Furthermore, yet both are small manufacturer that need to extend their product portfolio to support their economic sustainability. This combination could benefit to their brand reputation and improve the market share (Koenigsegg to the hi-end consumers; Saab to the mid & mid-hi markets).

2.5 Saab-Spyker Automobiles (2010–2011 Bankruptcy)

Spyker, a Dutch sports car maker made a bid almost right after the Koenigsegg withdrew from the bid. In January 2010 General Motors confirmed that the sale of Saab to Spyker had been agreed. To make Saab profit again, Spyke's plane was to bring back Saab's design DNA. The CEO of Spyker Victor Muller declared: "We need to give our customers the clear message, that Saabs will be Saabs again ^[iii] p.13." Its business plan predicted a maximum need for US\$1 billion before Saab returned to profitability by 2012.

The new company Saab-Spyker was in an urgent need of financial support. Besides the limited US\$544 loan from European Investment Bank (EIB), Holweg and Oliver claim that more or less everything was going to hinge on how the new 9-5 was received. Although the model would be launched by Spyker, The new 9-5 (second generation) was designed under GM's stewardship. As such, the products will state the design legacy of GM ^[iii]. My view point is: Since GM had almost destroyed Saab's reputation under its leadership; how the 9-5 2nd will be received was not expected. On the one hand, even though the 9-5 2nd had successive on both sales and reputation, it had nothing to do with Spyker. Furthermore, if the 9-5 2nd is received well, Saab's consumers might build their confidence on it which means Spyker will have limited choice on designing following Saab models.

In April 2010, the second generation 9-5 went into full production. Holweg and Oliver argue that "the car received a fairly positive, but

somewhat lukewarm reception from the motoring press ^[iii] p.15."

"The Saab is certainly a lot more interesting and, to my eyes, rather better looking. Given a choice of an A6, a 5-series, an E-class or a Saab 9-5, I'd take the Saab and enjoy the difference ^[iii] p.15."

"Is the new 9-5 going to rip up the rulebook? Hardly. Many customers will be wary after the bankruptcy and may well be perfectly happy with their A6s, 5-series and E-classes ^[iii] p.15."

"The 9-5 has plenty of notable qualities. All it really lacks is a distinctive style ^[iii] p.15."

Though the 9-5 2nd was sharing its platform with the Buick LaCrosse; the exterior design is quite successful in comparison to previous models. Paukert argue that "despite shared architectures and similar drivetrains, the 9-5 looks, feels and goes down the road in a wholly different fashion than its TriShield relatives. Indeed, sampled back-to-back, you'd probably be hard pressed to find much common ground ^[xiii]." From my point of view, the 9-5 2nd was on the right track. From its exterior design, we can see clear references from the iconic 99 (1967) and 900 (1978): The slightly curving wind shield; the extending lines go from the eyes to the A pillars; and most importantly, the design team bring back the classical hatch back design.

However, the sales of new 9-5 did not take off. Earlier production estimate was 50-60,000 units in 2010; at the end of the year, only 32,048 cars were produced, almost half amount than the prediction

Figure 2.5-1



1



2

The figure shows the two major companies who had participated the bid to purchase Saab from GM.

1. Koenigsegg is a super car manufacturer in Sweden. Similar to Saab, Koenigsegg highlight their products with the connection of jet fighters. The company tried to purchase Saab in 2009, but fail in the end.

2. Spyker is a Dutch sports car maker; the connection with aviation industry is imbedded in its history. The company became Saab's owner in 2010.

^[iii]. It was a warning signal for Spyker. Eventually, the 9-5 2nd did not achieve its sales goal. Running out of insufficient, Saab factory had first time forced to stop on 29 March 2011, and twice more in the following weeks. On April 7, the entire production called to an end without given data for a restart ^[iii] p.17. Saab's President and CEO Victor Muller then turned to China for seeking possible investor partners. At first, several investors from China had shown their interests, and were almost ready to agree the bid.

Nonetheless, GM as one of Saab's major stakeholders who still supported Saab with engines and transmissions, refused to approve the deal. Following statement was issued by GM on 8 Nov 2011. Retrieving from Holweg & Oliver's paper: "GM would not be able to support a change in the ownership of Saab which could negatively impact GM's existing relationships in China or otherwise adversely affect GM's interests worldwide ^[iii] p.19." Without any investment and the debts were still building high, Saab finally went into bankruptcy in 19 December 2011.

Figure 2.5-2



The 9-5 2nd was developed from the Buick Lacrosse platform. It was considered as the best "Saab looking" vehicle produced by GM's ^[iii].

Figure 2.6



Saab Phoenix was designed by Jason Castriota. It was unveiled at the 2011 Geneva Motor Show as a concept car ^[xvi].

2.6 National Electric Vehicle Sweden (2012-)

On 13 June 2012, Saab Automobile AB and its subsidiaries: Saab Automobile Powertrain AB, Saab Automobile Tools AB and the estate of Saab's factory were acquired by the National Electric Vehicle Sweden ^[iii] The company is formed by a group of Chinese, Japanese and Swedish investors who plan to convert the company into a manufacturer of electric vehicles; lead by ex-Volvo Trucks chief Karl-Erling Trogen. "We will match Swedish automobile design and manufacturing experience with Japanese E.V. Technology and a strong presence in China." Stated by Trogen ^[xiv]. NEVS is planning on the release for pure electronic Saab by 2014. The first model is developed with the current 9-3's technology, but the up-coming models will be built on the "Phoenix" platform, stated by Johan Kai Jiang the owner and CEO of NEVS ^[xv]. (The phoenix platform is developed under GM for the usage of future Saabs ^[xvi])

Holweg & Oliver argue that "Saabs were frequently referred to in the motoring press as 'quirky', and were particularly liked by those in the creative professions, academics and the like ^[iii] p.9." The "Saabness" is still embedded in its original markets—UK, US and the Nordic area ^[iii]. Therefore, As long as NEVS names "Saab" to their vehicle, they will have to respect to the original Saab's spirit in order to benefit from it.

2.7 Conclusion

Saab's brand identities had been mismanaged in the last 20 years. It seriously damaged the company's reputation. To bring alive Saab's business, Muller state that "Saab's need to be Saab's again ^[iii] p.13". In doing so, this study focus on resolving the design challenge on identifying the valuable design legacy.

Holweg & Oliver claim that the knowledge of "Saabness" is still embedded in its original markets ^[iii]. From the historical review, we notice that the old models (such as the 900) were received better than the new models (after the 900). Therefore, I would argue that the valuable design legacy of Saab is lying in its past. It hooks out the challenge for NEVS as well as the major research goal of this study:

- What should NEVS bring back from the past; and how can it be interpreted for electrical vehicles?

CHAPTER 03

STUDYING A BRAND STYLE

3.1 General understanding of styles	23
3.2 Styles associate with brands	23
3.3 Styles study on automobiles	24

A strong identity can produce noticeable effects in products.

In this chapter, I explain (1) how people recognize styles, (2) why styles so important to brands and (3) the challenges involved in doing a study on brand styles in the automotive industry.

I follow the view of Person and Snelders that a brand style represents a certain way at working ^[iv], and the approach made by Stacey that styles perceived differently by designers and ordinary people ^[xvii]. I also reviewed Karjalainen's "Semantic Transformation in Design" (2004) to understand how a design legacy was used in the case of Volvo.

The overall objective is to provide a foundation for analyzing the brand style of Saab and what to potentially use in its rich design heritage.

3.1 General understanding of styles

"Styles do not exist in isolation ^{[xvii] p.19.}" In many studies, styles are explained as a result after comparing with other features, structures or objects.

"The notion of style seems intrinsically linked to how we seek similarities and differences between objects created by different designers and produced by different brands ^{[iv] p.84.}"

"Object recognition is preconscious, and it includes recognition of the object's category, or several overlapping categories, and sometimes similarity or difference from other objects ^{[xvii] p.10.}"

It is furthermore pointed out that how a person recognizes styles is depending on his / her knowledge as well as interests in objects.

"Style perception depends on our understanding of function and structure, but the relationship is subtle. Our mental models of an artifact – our conceptions of its structure, internal functioning, and behavior – depend on the depth of our knowledge ^{[xvii] p.2.}"

"Receivers in the market may be unaware of the company's practices and intentions, and they may have other interests when ascribing products to a brand style ^{[iv] p.91.}"

This implies that a person might only have a vague awareness about styles ^[iv]. This explains why it is important to understand the knowledge gap between a company and its consumers.

3.2 Styles associate with brands

The overall concept of a brand had been clearly explained by Roellig: "(A brand) is really an aggregation of all the physical and emotional characteristics of a company, a product, or a service encountered by the consumers at all points of contact ^{[xviii] p.2.}" He further suggested that "Before a solid foundation can be established, companies must determine the brand's core attributes, personality, and positioning by appraising its market category ^{[xviii] p.2.}"

A common way to form a brand style is by repeating concrete attributes or abstract references ^[iv]. It is claim by Person & Snelders that "current discourse on brand styles is confronted with the problem of where and how to search for tangible evidence of styles in products ^{[iv] p.85.}" Some cases show that even without incorporating specific design elements in each product, the brand style could still highly recognizable. For instance: The products of Alessi are sharing a non-physical identification–playfulness as its brand style. Such a design language could be applied into a variety ways but still strongly states Alessi's brand identity. This evidence implies that it is not always to incorporate specific design elements in each product; as a brand style can also be established by abstract attributes ^[iv].

Nevertheless, some important characteristics of brand styles and their meaning may be overlooked or underestimated ^[iv]. This is when misunderstandings occur between different stakeholders. For instance, GM's misbranding on Saab's may be due to their misunderstanding of consumers' perceptions and preconceptions of the brand.

3.3 Styles study on automobiles

The judgment of styles is based on people’s experience and interests. In the case of automobile, people who live in different market segments could recognize the same brand differently. This idea is addressed from an interview comment in Karjalainen’s work: “To recognize and apply Scandinavian design is maybe even easier if you are not Scandinavian [xix] p.189.” Therefore, styles could be described locally, it is then important that the market segment need to be considered when conducting the research.

The style of a car brand is constructed from a complexity of features. A car designer might be able to identify the style of a brand specifically; nevertheless, most consumers might only have little awareness or interest on it. In this case, it is doubtful that a describable style can be defined. However, according to previous studies, a brand’s style can be identified from gathering numerous details; it is therefore possible from a new product development perspective to claim the style of a car brand from collecting the highly recognizable features.

To sum up, styles are understood differently [iv]. This could cause the misunderstanding between companies and consumers. Therefore, this study is aiming to clarify the different opinions between insiders and outsiders; taking Saab as the example on demonstrating the research method and the analysis framework. In the end, based on the analysis, I suggest how NEVS could adapt Saab’s design legacy to its new products, and benefit from the brand identity of the past.

In Karjalainen’s work, he introduces Warell’s categorization of product functions [xix] to outline the scope of his study. (see figure 3.3) In my thesis, I use Warell’s categorization on a more general level in understanding Saab’s brand identity; in which I discuss the internal product functions (abstract references) and human-product interaction (concrete attributes).

Figure 3.3

Function Class	Function Type			Descriptive Words
Technical Functions (internal product functions)	Operative	Primary	Transforming	Transform Transmit Rotate
		Secondary	Communication Interface Power Control Protection	Regulate Convert Supply
	Structure			Connect Support Restrain
Interactive Functions (human-product interaction)	Ergonomic			Protect Enable Facilitate Fit/Suit
	Communicative	Semantic		Express Describe Identity Exhort
		Syntactic		Refer Connect Unite Discern Balance

Scope of Karjalainen’s work

Scope of this study

Warell’s categorization of product functions (source: Karjalainen 2004)

CHAPTER 04

METHOD

4.1 Data collection	26
4.1.1 The interviewees	26
4.1.2 The questionnaire and materials	27
4.2 Data analysis	28

From the previous chapter, we learned that people recognize style differently; it depends on one's knowledge and interest. Such difference could lead to the wrong decision making on new products development. In the case of GM-Saab, the misbranding of Saab was partly caused from their misunderstanding of consumers' expectations and underestimating of Saab's brand heritage.

In realizing how a brand can be differently perceived by insiders and outsiders; in this chapter, I explain the research process on discovering the varying Saab identities in this chapter.

4.1 Data collection

As mentioned earlier, the market segment should be considered when conducting the style study. As the study is conducted in Finland, I recruited local residents to represent the consumers at Nordic market. My goal in the data collecting phase is to discover how different stakeholders (insiders and outsiders) identify Saab. I covered three groups, totally 18 people into the interviews. I conducted 7 face to face interviews, 1 Skype interview, 1 telephone interview, and the remaining 9 interviews were done in the form of an internet questionnaire.

4.1.1 The interviewees

Group I: Saab insiders (designers)

The designers group represents the view point from the company's side. As insiders, their opinions could reflect the knowledge of Saab's brand identity. By comparing with outsiders opinions, we can find out the gap between company and their consumers. Following are the participants within designers group.

Nilsson Ström Aina (I1) who joined Saab in 1976. In her career at Saab, she had participated the accessories design for Saab 900 (1978). The interview was conducted through telephone and recorded by hand writing.

Eero Miettinen (I2) who joined Saab in 1982. In his career at

Saab, he had participated the exterior design of Saab 900 in the 2 doors version (1982) & the convertible version (1985). The interview was conducted by face to face meeting and recorded by sound recorder.

Tony Catignani (I3) who joined Saab in 1984. In his career at Saab, he had participated the exterior design of the first generation Saab 9-5, and the interior design of 9-3 series after 1991. The interview was conducted through Skype and recorded by sound recorder

Group F: Saab fanatics

The fanatics group represents the view points of loyal consumers. With these interviews, the purpose is to discover the features that have successfully kept the interests of loyalties over years. The interviewees were recruited mainly from the Saab club Finland and the members of Aalto University's car lab (Finland).

Within this group, I conducted two face to face interviews, one through Facebook; and four other interviews were made through internet questionnaire. Both Facebook and Face to Face interviews contained rich information. Though I receive qualitative data through the online questionnaires as well, the answers were somehow limited by the questions. To set up the online questionnaire, I included sub-questions and further explanation

to every main question. It was posted to the Saab club's forum and delivered by some interviewees to their fanatic friends (see Appendix 2).

Group R: Regular (non-Saab) users

The third group represents the view points as the outsiders of the company. The purpose is to discover how Saab is perceived by regular consumers. Because most consumers stand as outsiders to a brand, their opinions state more closely to the reality facing Saab's brand reputation.

In this group, I conducted four face to face interviews and four internet questionnaires. The drawback of online questionnaires is that people only answered the settle questions. Furthermore, I eliminated one questionnaire because it does not contain effective information (The answers are too simplify and do not fully respond to the questions).

4.1.2 The questionnaire and material

There are several research methods ^{[xx] chapter 6.1} to be chose when doing surveys: (1) The postal surveys are time consuming and typically focuses on gathering quantitative data instead of

qualitative data. (2) The telephone surveys could gather qualitative data; but in reality, it would be hard to get the phone number from random strangers. (3) Eventually, I chose the face to face interviews as the major method for data collection.

For the design of a questionnaire, there are several forms of question ^{[xx] chapter 6.4}: (1) The closed questions should be drafted in advance, complete with all the possible answers, from which respondents are asked to choose one of the answers ^{[xx] p.101}. It does not suit for this research for several reasons: First of all, I cannot draft all the possible questions in advance since I have little awareness of Saab. Second, it will limit the all the other possible answers that I might not be aware of. (2) The ranking scale is another form of closed question ^[xx] which also not suit my situation. To make the most outcomes from the interviews, I choose the (3) open questions which allows individuals to respond in any way they wish ^{[xx] p.102}.

Following is the structure of the questionnaire:

- (1) Understanding individuals' background.
- (2) Discovering individuals' interests about Saab.
- (3) Determining the iconic models from both positive and negative aspects. In this set of questions, each respondent received

pictures of 14 models (see figure 4.1.2). Among these models, the respondents were asked to identify the iconic models and the anti-iconic models. Here, I also encouraged the interviewees to tell the reasons that affect their judgments.

(4) Discovering the competitors of Saab.

(5) Discussing the individual's look about Saab in general.

Figure 4.1



The figure shows the visual material that was given to interviewees. The material incorporated (1) the first model of a new generation or (2) models that carried breakthrough technology or design legacy.

4.2 Data analysis

From the previous chapters, we learned that styles are received differently by individuals; such differences could cause the misunderstanding between company and its consumers. In this case, the collected data were distributed over three different groups. By comparing each answer, I am aiming on: (1) Determining the iconic Saab's models. (2) Locating the Saab's competitors in different markets. (3) Identifying the important design legacy of Saab.

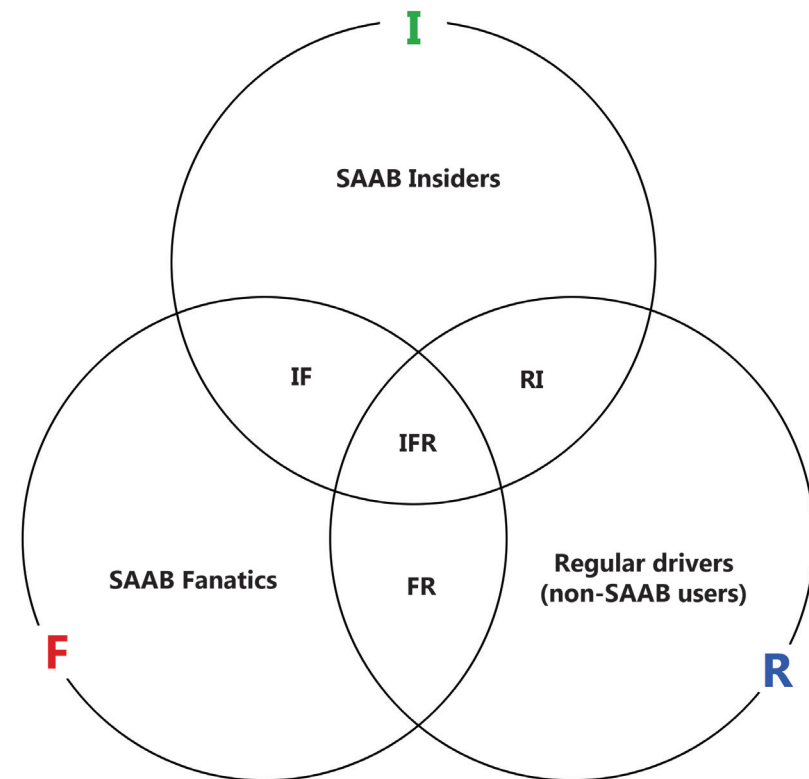
Figure 4.2 (Page.29) presents the framework that was used when analyzing the collected data. The framework illustrates the argument by Person & Snelders that a comparison of different stakeholders can unveil important characteristics of a brand. To this end, The main zone in each group shows the distinguished view points from the company insiders (group code: I), the loyal consumers (group code: F) and the potential consumers (group code: R).

According to the research topics (1 Models, 2 Competitors, 3 Features). The central area shows the common answers made by each stakeholder. First, It indicates the iconic / anti-iconic models. These models can be considered as reference points when designing new products. Second, it shows Saab's competitors. From which NEVS could understand how the consumers perceive them differently. Third, it identifies the strongly recognized Saab's attributes which should be adapted to future models.

The cross area: IF zone and the RI zone provides supporting information; indicating the need of loyal consumers and potential consumers, from which NEVS can find: (1) Which models from past Saab's history were interested to the loyalty and the potential consumers? (2) Which brands would they turn to if NEVS fails on meeting their expectations to Saab. (3) What specific characteristics are founded interest for loyal and potential consumers? Answers from these two areas (IF & RI) are useful when NEVS wishes to extend the product portfolio.

Lastly, the area between F zone and R zone represents the "blind spot" of company, from where the features are mentioned by the fanatics and the regular consumers but were overlooked by the insiders. As such, it could be considered as either a serious strategic defect or an opportunity for new product development.

Figure 4.2



The figure illustrates the frame work that used to analyze the collected data of this study.

CHAPTER 05

IDENTIFYING THE SAAB STYLE

5.1 The markers of Saab models	31
5.1.1 The iconic models	32
5.1.2 The anti-iconic models	34
5.1.3 The ambiguity models	35
5.2 The competitors of Saab	36
5.3 The valuable Saab heritage	37
5.3.1 Capturing the concrete attributes	38
5.3.2 Capturing the abstract references	42
5.4 Conclusion	44

In this chapter, I first discuss the markers of Saab's products: (1) the iconic models, (2) the anti-iconic models and the (3) ambiguity models.

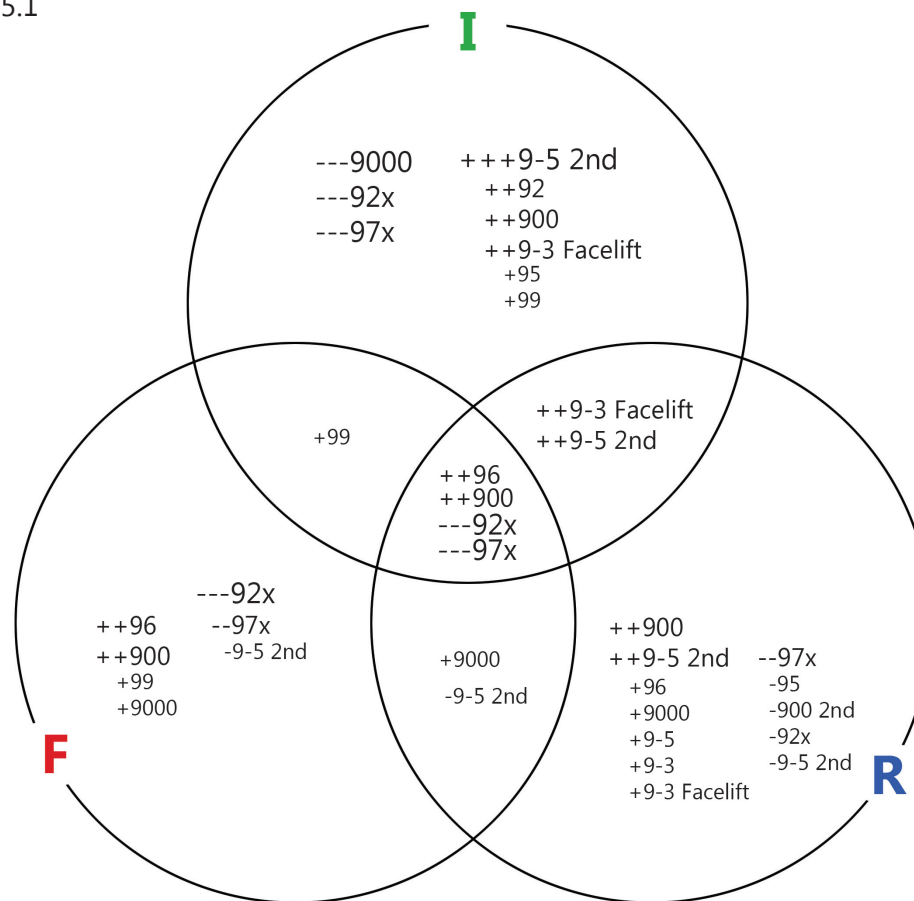
Second, I identify the key competitors in order to further clarifying Saab's advantage and disadvantage in different markets.

Third, I deliberate the valuable attributes. These attributes will be further divided by its characteristics: (1) The characteristics that can be directly recognized by visual contact are classified under the "concrete attributes". (2) The characteristics that are not necessarily recognized by visual contact are classified under the "abstract references".

	1960 - 96	1968 - 99	1978 - 900	1985 - 9000	2005 92-X	2005 9-7X	2008 9-3F	2010 9-5 2nd
Insiders	+		++	---	---	---	++	+++
Fanatics	++	+	++	+	---	--		-
Regulars	+		++	+	-	--	+	- / ++

Table 5.1

Figure 5.1



5.1 The markers of Saab models

Table 5.1 provides an overview of the responses to the following questions: (1) Which Saab cars do you think could represent the brand well? and (2) Which Saab cars do you think have weakened the brand? Each "+" and "-" represents a situation when 25% of interviewees agreed / disagreed to the model. In figure 5.1, the analysis is further illustrated in a framework that displays how different stakeholders perceived the iconic models of Saab. From this, eight models are selected for further discussion.

5.1.1 The iconic Saab models

96 (1960) / 99 (1968) / 900 (1978) / 9-3 2nd Facelift (2008)

5.1.2 The anti-iconic Saab models

9-2x (2005) / 9-7x (2005)

5.1.3 The ambiguity Saab models

9000 (1985) / 9-5 2nd (2010)

5.1.1 The iconic models

Saab 96 (1960)

More than 50% of the interviewees perceived 96 as one of the best iconic models; a large number of individuals defined it as the last model that combined all the good features of Sixten Sason's design.

"The 96 was a design icon of its era. Very versatile (multi functional/ practical) car, which has been used in many roles ranging from racing to family use. Simple structures and usability." (R1)

"The 96 was the final and most advanced incarnation of the original, airplane-wing-form Saabs. Classic and robust, a car with unique looks and capability to cope even in severe winter conditions." (F6)

"It has character. It's the last of the old generation Saabs (92, 93, 96 models), as it combines all the good features of the aforementioned models." (F4)

Saab 99 (1968)

The turbo engine made 99 a well-known model. Besides its sporty characteristics, it was recognize as one of the iconic models of Saab.

I3: I think the 99 turbo was the number one car that people will remember.

F4: The 99 had created the design features and characteristic for Saab and later Saab models (the ignition switch and the profile of the car).

F5: The 99's onwards there has been a recognizable line of Saab-design in all the models. Look at the silhouettes of each: even though the car changes and develops, there's still same brand image in all of them.

R1: The 99 (1968): It is the first in line with hints of the "Saab-look" that the brand still has as the base for its designs.

Saab 900 (1978)

Besides 99 (1968), 900 was also considered as one of the best iconic models by all interviewees. Both 99 and 900 models were perceived as classical examples of future design. Its hatch back was specified by a large number of interviewees. Furthermore, several of them indicated the hook line as a significant attribute of the exterior design as well.

"The 900 could be one of the best representative models..... (distinguished from others by) hatch back, hook line went over the shoulder on the side until the eyes." (I1)

"The 900 (1979) has all the Saab features: the hatch back, short wheel base, front and rear over hand were very long, the wedge shape very extreme, the hook at the end of wedge.....features taken from the 99 (1968)....." (I2)

"The 900 (1978) is probably the most recognizable Saab, especially the hatch back (character going to other models)." (R5)

Saab 9-3 2nd Facelift (2008)

The facelift version of 9-3 2nd was received well by insiders and several regular consumers. However, there is limited information about this model. Only a few individuals made direct comment to its facial design.

"The 9-3 Facelift tried to reference from the history." (R4)

Overall, the detail discussion of Saab's exterior design was missing from the interviews. Instead, it is often recognized as sculptural, robust or rigid as a whole.

"(Saab's styles are) Understated, Scandinavian style (functional with the minimal), sculptural look, emphasize on function more than the form." (I3)

"The 96 (1960) was the final and most advanced incarnation of the original, airplane- wing- form Saabs. Classic and robust, a car with unique looks and capability to cope even in severe winter conditions.....The 900 (1978) was also a very advanced, classic, clever and robust Saab." (F6)

"The 900 (1978): It had a long production time. Finnish police used to drive it... First with turbo charge engine...Saab shape...Extremely 80's look (robust)" (R2)

Figure 5.1.1-1

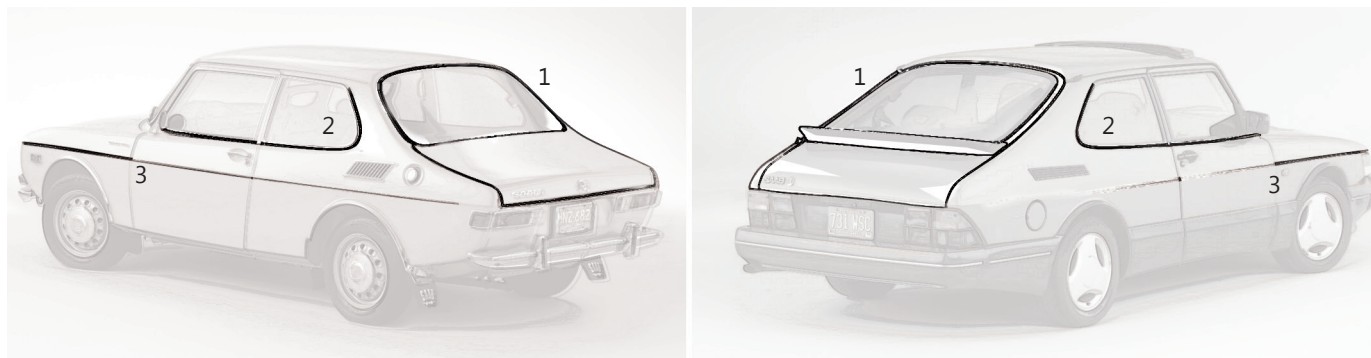


Saab 99 (1968)

Saab 900 (1978)

The 900 and the 99 are very similar to each other because they share plenty of design legacies.

Figure 5.1.1-2



Saab 99 (1968)

Saab 900 (1978)

The figure shows the highlighted design icons between the 99 and the 900:

- (1) Hatch back
- (2) Hook line
- (3) Hood line

5.1.2 The anti-iconic models

Saab 9-2x & Saab 9-7x (2005)

9-2x and 9-7x received the hardest criticisms from a great number of interviewees. More than 75% of the interviewees perceived these models as the worst product through Saab's entire history in terms of design. However, several individuals recognized them as breakthrough movement in terms of extending the product portfolio.

"Saab jeopardized its reputation by introducing 9-2x and 9-7x (2005). The Saab customers were more sensitive to the origin than car customers in general. The designers did all they could but it is not all about visual appearance." (I1)

"The 9-2x was so GM, the whole car was a Subaru." (F3)

"The 9-7x is American style, it is a different type compared with usual Saab." (R5)

"About the 9-2x and the 9-7x, I like the idea because it's so weird, but it's far from a real Saab" (F1)

"Saab was brave on doing something special." (R1)

"Subaru is a bit like Saab from Japanese point of view from the aspect on how they made car (being different)." (R2)

Due to the fact that the design failure of these models was directly linked to interviewees' criticism; it proved that Saab's unique design legacies had already imbedded to its consumers' recognition.

Figure 5.1.2

Saab 9-2x (2005)



Saab 9-7x (2005)



Subaru Impreza



Chevrolet Trailblazer

The 9-2x was a rebadged Subaru Impreza and the 9-7x was a rebadged Chevrolet Trailblazer. Both models received serious criticisms on ruining Saab's brand identity.

5.1.3 The ambiguity models

Saab 9000 (1985)

The 9000 received opposing comments among different stakeholders. All insiders perceived it as an anti-iconic model; in contrary, some fanatics and regular consumers appreciated its exterior design.

Opposite to the judgments of its appearance, a large number of interviewees complimented to its interior design because of its comfortable cabin space.

"The 9000 body packaging had collaborated too much with Fiat, which controlling the Saab shape" (I2)

"I like the design, but I didn't like the driving. I think it was a very handsome car with good proportions." (F2)

"There are no similar shapes as a Saab..... It is ugly" (R6)

"The 9000 did not looks like a Saab, but the interior was Saab" (I2)

"The first Saab I knew was the 9000. Every holiday I was sitting in Saab, its seats were very good" (F3)

"The 9000 did really well on functional, rather big, and comfortable..... like a German's car (which I like it), good for traveling long distance and in high speed." (R2)

SSAB 9-5 2nd (2010)

Besides 9000, the 9-5 2nd received conflicting comments between different stakeholders. From the insiders' point of view, the 9-5 2nd could have brought back Saab's reputation because of its fine exterior design; from the perspective of regular consumers, more than 50% of interviewees perceived it as one of the best ionic models as well. Nevertheless, in contrary, it is perceived as an anti-iconic model by a number of regular consumers and fanatics.

"I like the 9-5 2nd, it has strong character that doesn't look like other cars..... beautiful profile." (I1)

"The 9-5 2nd was a complete development of all Saab features which could be a born classic" (I2)

"It looks like a Mazda or any other car from Asia." (R1)

"It looks stylish." (R3)

"I could recognize it from magazine." (R5)

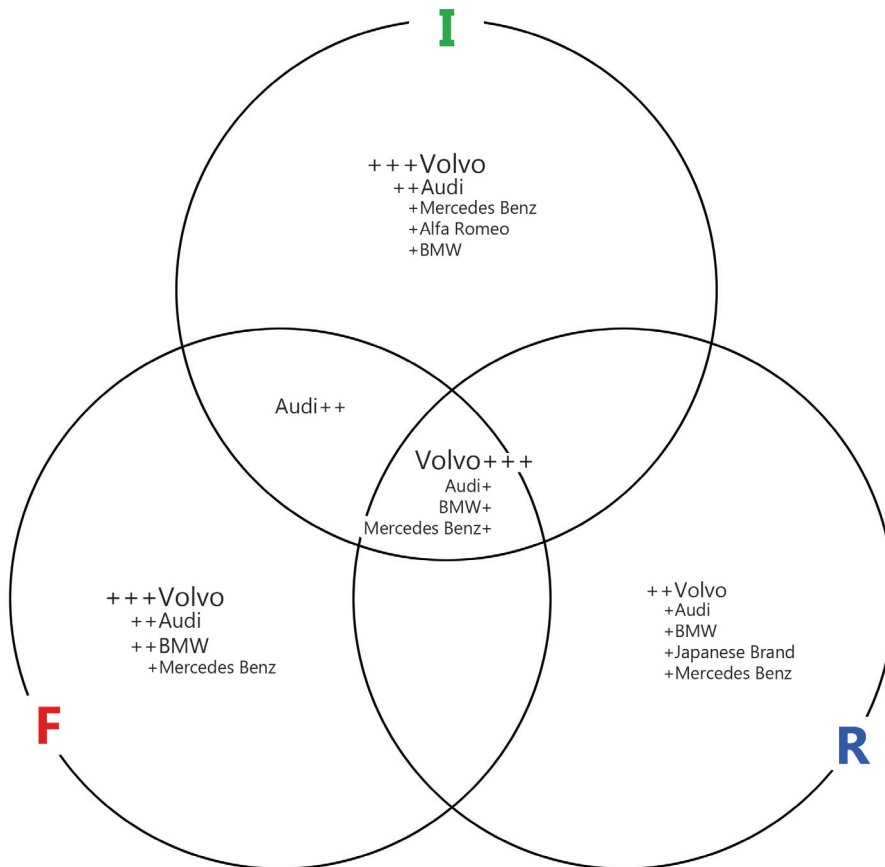
"The 9-5 2nd (2010) did not look like a Saab anyway." (F2)

"The 9-5 2nd was an Opel insignia (Opel like car)." (F3)

	Alfa Romeo	Audi	BMW	JP. brands	M. Benz	Volvo
Insiders	+	+	+		+	+++
Fanatics		++	++		+	+++
Regulars		+	+	++	+	++

Table 5.2

Figure 5.2



5.2 The competitors of Saab

Table 5.2 provides an overview of the responses to the following question: Which brands do you think could be Saab's competitors? Each "+" represents a situation when 25% of interviewees agreed to the brand. In figure 5.2, the analysis is further illustrated in a framework that displays how different stakeholders perceived the competitors.

More than 75% of interviewee perceive Volvo as Saab's major competitor. It is furthermore pointed out that both companies shared similar market segment, and competed in terms of cultivating a safety image.

"They were both functional practical. The safety feature was shouted very loud by Volvo but Saab is equally the same." (I3)

"I think the biggest competitor or comparable car has always been Volvo (in the Nordic at least)." (F1)

"It is Volvo, especially in Nordic countries. It makes cars with similar features. The value of the car is based on safety and steady performance." (F4)

"Volvo drives the same market segment as Saab (safety, family)" (R3)

Besides, Audi, BMW and Mercedes-Benz were also raised as strong competitors to Saab. These brands usually came up together when interviewees mentioned the Saab's competitors outside the Nordic area. To name one, Audi can be considered as the major competitor outside the Nordic area.

"Others could be Mercedes, BMW and Audi. Especially in the 90's these

5.3 The valuable Saab heritage

37

brands competed with Saab, as they all had models with similar features and target markets. They are all in the same price point of upper mid-market" (F4)

"Audi at least here in Finland, and especially in 900/9-3 class. There are similarities between Audi and Saab in philosophy, technology, client profiles, company history and so on." (F6)

Furthermore, a special result is shown from the R zone (regular consumers). A number of interviewees highlighted the Japanese brands as Saab's competitors from the aspects of price and quality. Few of them furthermore pointed out that Subaru or Lexus are similar to Saab. They are in some markets being recognized as choices of individualists.

"Volvo, Audi, Jaguar, Mercedes, BMW, Lexus. I think they offer cars in the same quality, size and price groups, and all of them have a distinctive personality like Saab does" (F7)

"Lexus maybe the 'default choice' in the USA; but in European market, Lexus is pretty individual choice." (R2)

From the previous chapters we learned that "styles do not exist in isolation ^[xvii] p.19"; but rather composed by variety of attributes ^[iv]. In other words, before we can specify some kind of style, we should look into the unique features of Saab. The following 18 features are retrieved from the interviews. Following Person & Snelders's argument and Warell's categorization of product functions, theses features are divided into 2 major themes for further discussions: The concrete attributes (define by the human-product interaction) and the abstract references (define by internal product function).

5.3.1 Capturing the concrete attributes

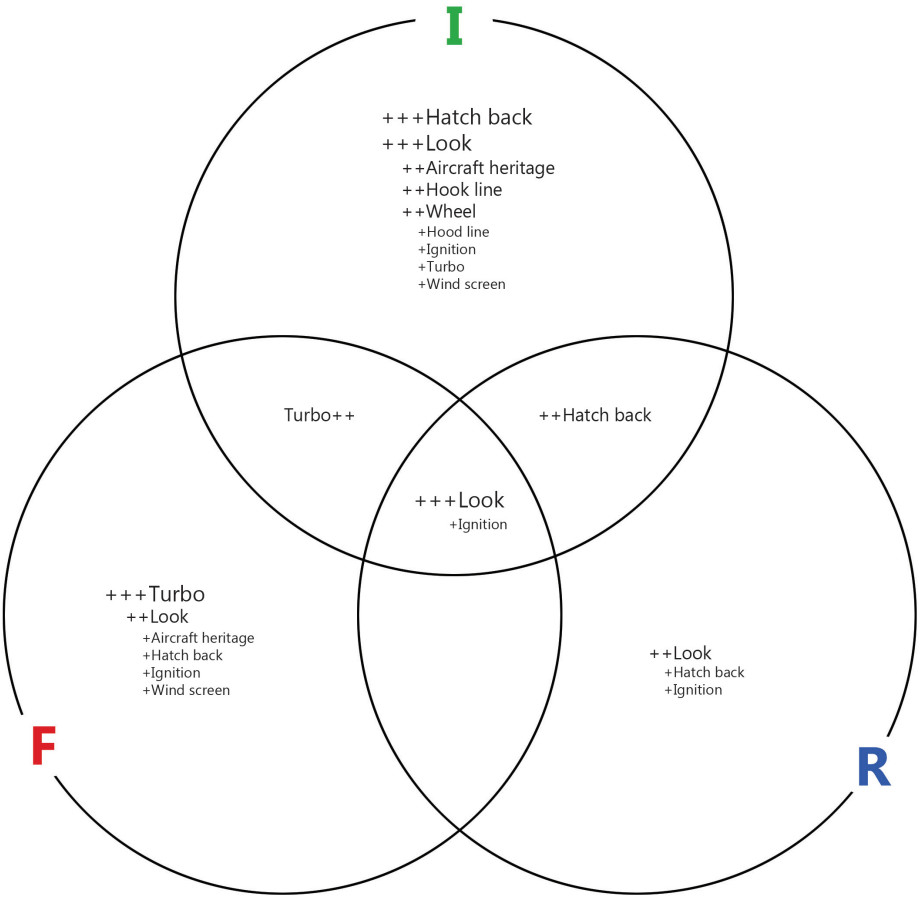
Table 5.3.1-1 provides an overview of the key attributes that distinguish Saab's identity from other brands. Each "+" represents a situation when 25% of interviewees agreed to the features. In figure 5.3.1-1, the analysis is further illustrated in a framework that displays how different stakeholders perceived the concrete attributes of Saab, from which I will divide four topics for discussion:

- (1) The core heritage of Saab. (IFR zone)
- (2) The important attributes to loyal consumers. (IF zone)
- (3) The important attributes to regular consumers. (RI zone)
- (4) The forgotten attributes.

Table 5.3.1-1

	Aircraft Heritage	Look	Wind Screen	Hood Line	Hook Line	Hatch Back	Wheel	Turbo	Ignition Key
Insiders	++	+++	+	+	++	+++	++	+	+
Fanatics	+	++	+					+++	+
Regulars		++				+			+

Figure 5.3.1-1



The core heritage of Saab

More than 75% of interviewees pointed out that Saab's exterior design has its unique style that differs from other brands. Though everyone considered "look" as the most important identity of Saab, only insiders can clearly specify what the look entails. On the contrary, fanatics showed little interests about the detail of exterior design. Furthermore, regular consumers tended to observe large or obvious objects.

"The 900 (1978) has all the Saab features: The hatch back, short wheel base... Front and rear over hand were very long, the wedge shape very extreme..." (I2)

"In the 90's Saab had more style and character...soul... passion, it was ahead to Volvo in being brave in the look" (I3)

"Looks are one thing that defines a Saab. It doesn't have to be as beautiful as Alfa Romeo, but has its own character" (R2)

"The 900 (1978) is probably the most recognizable Saab, especially the hatch back (character going to other models). The 92 (1949): Its shape was unique, highly recognizable." (R5)

Besides the look, the location of ignition switch” is also perceived as a unique and defining feature of Saab.

“The 99 (1968) created the design features characteristic with Saab and later Saab models such as the ignition lock located between front seats” (F4)

“I like the quirks that make Saab a Saab. Ex. Ignition switch in the middle” (F5)

Figure 5.3.1-2



The Saab’s ignition switch is located near the gear lever.

Figure 5.3.1-3



Saab’s unique exterior design had distinguished their models from other competitors in the 1980’s. The most significant differences were the grille and the design language at body side.

The important attributes to loyal consumers (IF zone)

From the table 5.3.1-1 (Page.38) we can see that "turbo" was strongly emphasized by the fanatics- six out of seven fanatic participants highlighted this object even though it is introduced nearly 35 years ago.

"Saab made turbo engines an everyday thing, not just a premium-car choice." (F1)

"Maybe the most important thing with Saab 99 is that Saab introduced its first Turbo charged engine that became a success." (F4)

"Engine technology in the turbo and 16-valve models was 10 or 20 years ahead of competitors." (F6)

The important attributes to regular consumers (RI zone)

From the Saab's history, we learned that the "hatch back" is an important design that specifies Saab. From the interviews, "hatch back" was specified by every insiders and a medium number of the regular consumers.

"The 900 has all the Saab features.....the hatch back....." (I2)

"The 900 is probably the most recognizable Saab, especially the hatch back (character going to other models)." (R5)

The forgotten attributes

Wind screen: It was first adapted to the 99 (1968). But it was eliminated after the 900 (1978). In this case, though it is considered as a unique object ^[1], only a few interviewees recognized it.

"(Saab has its) Personal style. The line from the bonnet to the rear window like it was in 99 and 900, and the curving windscreen and shell-like bonnet." (F7)

Hood lines: They are two horizontal lines that extending from the edge of hood and go straight to the tail lamps. Probably because it is not an easy observed design language (almost every vehicle has lines at body side, but Saab is different from others by where they start), they were only recognized by a few individuals.

"The 99's onwards there has been a recognizable line of Saab-design in all the models. Look at the silhouettes of each: even though the car changes and develops, there's still same brand image in all of them." (F5)

"The 9-5 2nd: It looks like a Mazda or any other car from Asia. The horizontal hood line and some elements of the grille seem to be some of the only elements that are still there." (R1)

Hook Lines: They are positioned slightly higher than "hood lines". It start from the lower part of the hooks, going straight to the edge of head lamps. These features were only recognized by the insiders.

"The 900 (1978) which was carry from the 99 (1968)..... hatch back, hook line went over the shoulder on the side until the eyes." (I1)

Wheels: There were two types of wheels that had been highlighted.
(1) The 3-spoke wheels and (2) the "INCA" wheels.

"I think the 99 turbo was the number one car that people will remember..... the INCA wheels." (I3)

"The 9000 (1985) did not look like a Saab, but the interior was Saab. I could recognize by its grille, the 3-spoke wheels and the interior" (I2)

"The 9-3 1st (1998) coupe type of car which transportation the categories to the coming models..... I remember the Key hole which was next to the hand break... and the wheels (the 3-spoke wheel)." (R3)

Aircraft Heritage: Saab used to have a strong connection with the aircraft industry; it was a well-known and unique heritage. Yet, it was only highlighted by a limited number of interviewees.

"Back to the age of Saab 92 (1949) to 99 (1968), Saab had its unique style considering how other cars looked at the time. (For examples) personality, Connection to aircraft....." (I1)

"The 96 (1960) was the final and most advanced incarnation of the original, airplane-wing-form Saabs." (F6)

Figure 5.3.1-4

The figure shows the unique features that only been highlighted by few individuals.

1. 3-Spoke wheel
2. INCA wheel
3. Wind screen
4. Hook lines
5. Hood lines

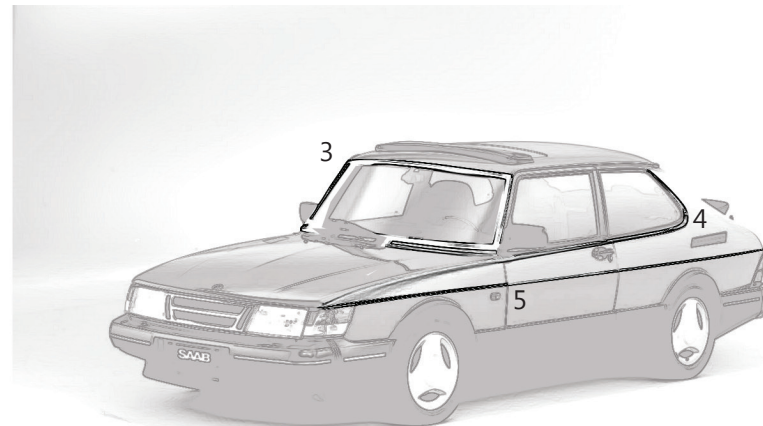
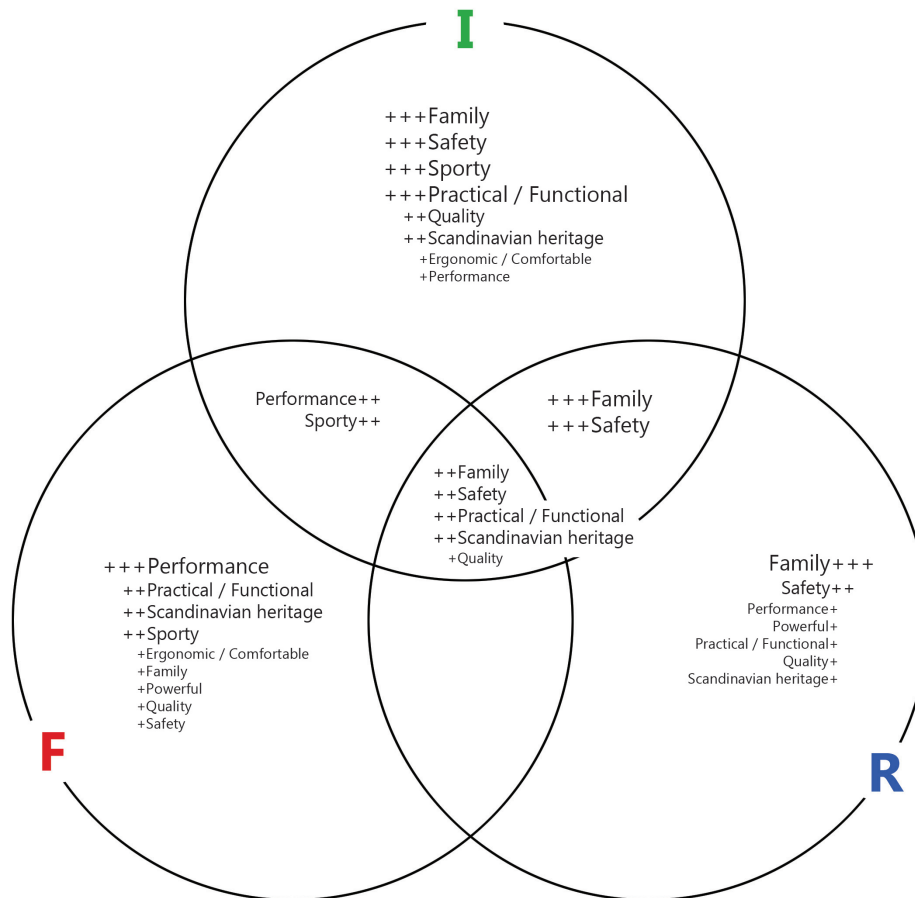


Table 5.3.2

	Ergonomic / Comfortable	Powerful	Safety	Family	Scandinavian Heritage	Practical / Functional	Quality	Performance	Sporty
Insiders	+		+++	+++	++	+++	++	+	+++
Fanatics	+	+	+	+	++	++	+	+++	++
Regulars		+	++	+++	+	+	+	+	

Figure 5.3.2



5.3.2 Capturing the abstract references

Table 5.3.2 provides an overview of the key references that distinguish Saab's identity from other brands. Each "+" represents a situation when 25% of interviewees agreed to the reference. In figure 5.3.2, the analysis is further illustrated in a framework that displays how different stakeholders perceived the abstract references of Saab, from which I divide the following discussions by two topics:

- (1) The core heritage of Saab. (IFR zone)
- (2) The different expectations to Saab. (IF & RI zone)

The core heritage of Saab

As shown from the central area in figure 5.3.2: (1) safety, (2) family, (3) practical / functional, (4) Scandinavian heritage and (5) quality are specified to identify Saab.

First of all, a large number of interviewees associate "safety" and "family" with "Scandinavian heritage".

"The Nordic winter has been a big inspiration in Saab design. (For example) crash safety" (F1)

"The value of Saab comes from its safety and coziness. It's made for the challenging Nordic weather circumstances." (F4)

"(Saab) has its own character: Practical, Scandinavian sensibility (which are) safe, comfortable, and great view for passengers." (R2)

"I like the safety feature for as a family car, really reliable" (R3)

Following, when it comes to compare with other brands, "quality" become the key word to represent Saab.

"Comparing Saab with Audi, they were similar on the aspects of quality and safety," (I1)

"(Saab could compete with) Maybe Mercedes but lower price; they are both in good quality." (R5)

"(Saab could compete with) Japanese and German cars on prize & quality." (R7)

Lastly, "practical / functional" is emphasized by a great number of interviewees. Instead of representing the modern models, it is referenced to the aged models such as 96 (1960) and 99 (1968)

"The organization focused very much on functionality, innovation and practical solution. (For example) The 900 (1978) which was carry from the 99 (1968)... combining functionality....." (I1)

"The 95 (1959) was very handy, very practical. It represented the functional side of Saab (technical and practical features)." (I2)

"The 96 (1960): It is a design icon of its era. Very versatile (multi functional/ practical) car, which has been used in many roles ranging from racing to family use" (R1)

The different expectations to Saab (IF & RI zone)

On one hand, "Performance" and "Sporty" were emphasized by fanatics. On the other hand, "Family" and "Safety" were raised strongly by regular consumers. From the insiders' point of views, they tended to argue that Saab's design approach had kept a good balance between family and fun-driving characteristics.

"I saw Saab as both a family car and fun to drive." (I1)

"In my opinion Saab bridges the gap on being a family car and sporty fun driving" (I3)

"Saab is always a family car first, but enough fun to keep the driver happy" (F1)

"My 9-3 SC and 9-5 SC are both basically good family cars with spacious booths. But they are also fun to drive" (F5)

"(Saab's style is) The Daddy -style... suit for family very much" (R1)

"Saab more likely family cars... emphasize on safety. Never associate to fun cars" (R5)

5.4 Conclusion

The markers of Saab models

The 96 (1960), 99 (1968) and 900 (1978) was recognized as the best iconic models through Saab's entire history. 96 (1960) was the last model whose exterior design had strong association with the aircraft industry. 99 (1968) had transformed Saab's conservative visual identity into a modern look. 900 (1978) shifted the design legacy of 99 (1968), making it the most well-known Saab. It came to define the Saab style for nearly 34 years so far.

On the other hand, the badged-engineering 9-2X and 9-7X (both presented in 2005) exemplified the anti-iconic Saab models. These models received the hardest criticism from a majority of interviewees; especially in terms of its design. In this case, we claim that Saab used to have its unique design legacy. Furthermore, though the Saab style is defined by aged models, it is still not forgotten and full of value.

The competitors of Saab

In the Nordic market, Saab's major competitor was Volvo: They were both well-known for safety features, and competed in similar market segments. Outside the Nordic area, Saab was mainly competing with BMW, Audi and Mercedes-Benz. Audi can be considered as the major competitor brand.

The concrete markers of Saab

"Look" was the most important concrete attribute that came to define Saab. There was little information about what objects had contributed to Saab's look, the overall style was often recognized as "sculptural" or "robust". "Hatch back" was the only object that had been specified from Saab's exterior; it was identified as the most important object of the brand.

Besides, there are two objects that furthermore identified a Saab from the inside. (1) The middle-located "ignition switch" is a unique feature that can only be found in Saab. (2) The "turbo-charged engine" is a key object that improves Saab's identity from technical aspect.

The abstract markers of Saab

There were five abstract references that came to define Saab: First of all, (1) safety, (2) family and (3) Scandinavian heritage were the top-three-highlighted features. These features were often been associated together; thus, we claim that the "Scandinavia heritage" was defined by Saab in terms of safety and family. Following, Saab's (4) quality was considered to be an advantage when competing with other brands. Lastly, the (5) practical / functional was also been identified. However, it was to describe the models produced before merging with GM.

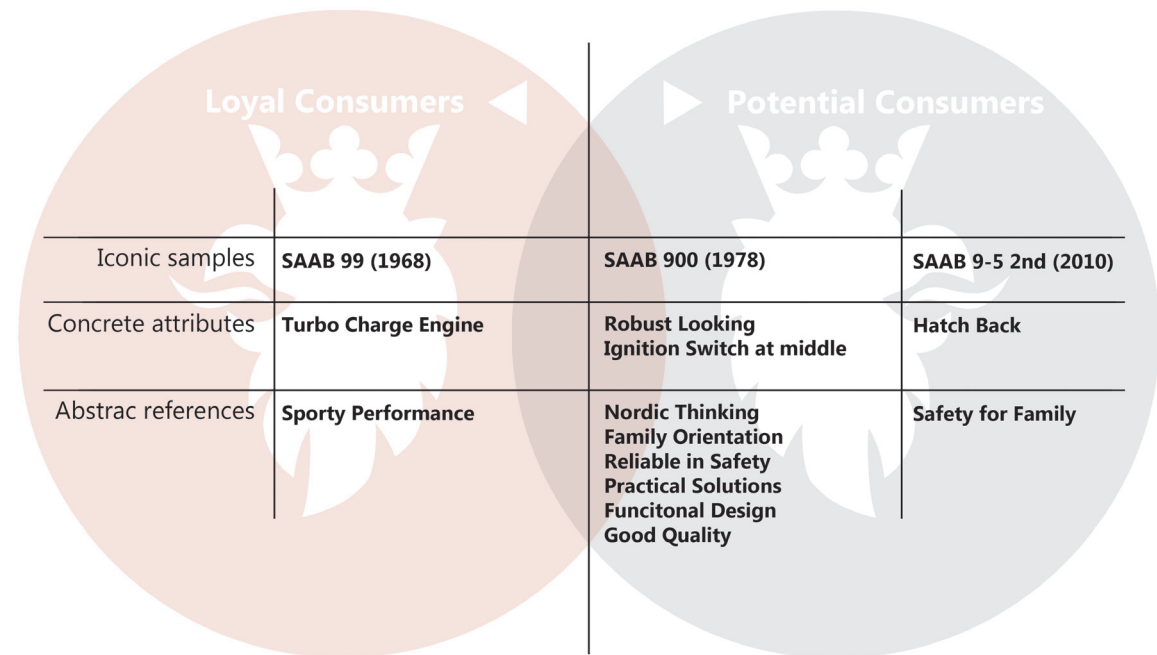
Overview of Saab's markers

An overview of Saab's markers is summarized in figure 5.4. In the middle, it shows the core identities of Saab: Robust looking, Nordic thinking, family orientation, reliability in terms of safety, practical solutions, functional design, good quality and the ignition switch at middles. These characteristics should be utilized to every upcoming Saab model.

On the left side, it exemplifies an index of a new model that can retrieve Saab's reputation from loyal consumers. This model can take the Saab 99 (1968) as its prototype. It should be adapted with Saab's turbo engine and emphasize on sporty performance.

On the right side, it suggests a blueprint of a new model that can attract potential consumers' attention. It should be a family-oriented car which applied with Saab's famous hatch back design. The 9-5 2nd (2010) can be a good example to look at when designing this model.

Figure 5.4



The figure shows an overview of the stylistic markers of Saab:

In the middle, it shows the core identities of Saab which should be utilized to every upcoming model.

On the left side, it exemplifies the contents of a new model that can retrieve Saab's reputation from loyal consumers.

On the right side, it suggests a blueprint of a new model that can attract potential consumers' attention.

CHAPTER 06

RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Short-term goals: Reestablishing Saab's design icon	47
6.2 Long-term goals: Improving Saab's product portfolio	51
6.3 Developing electric vehicles in China	54
6.4 Overview of recommendations	55

In the thesis, I argue that the demise of Saab is strongly linked to GM's mismanagement of the brand style of Saab. Therefore, I conducted style research on capturing the markers of Saab, from which I identified (1) the iconic models, (2) the competitors in the past and (3) the valuable features which come to define Saab.

In this chapter, I provide short-term and long-term recommendations for National Electric Vehicle Sweden in developing future models. The following questions guide my recommendations.

- *Why the Saab heritage important to NEVS?*
 - *What are Saab's consumers (loyalty & regular) expecting for?*
 - *How could NEVS utilize the Saab's valuable design heritage?*
-

6.1 Short-term goals: Reestablishing Saab's design icon

NEVS defines the new Saab as pure electric vehicle; which I think is a fresh perspective that could help bring back a dead brand. Pure electric-powered vehicles are still rare on the market. If Saab could be one of the

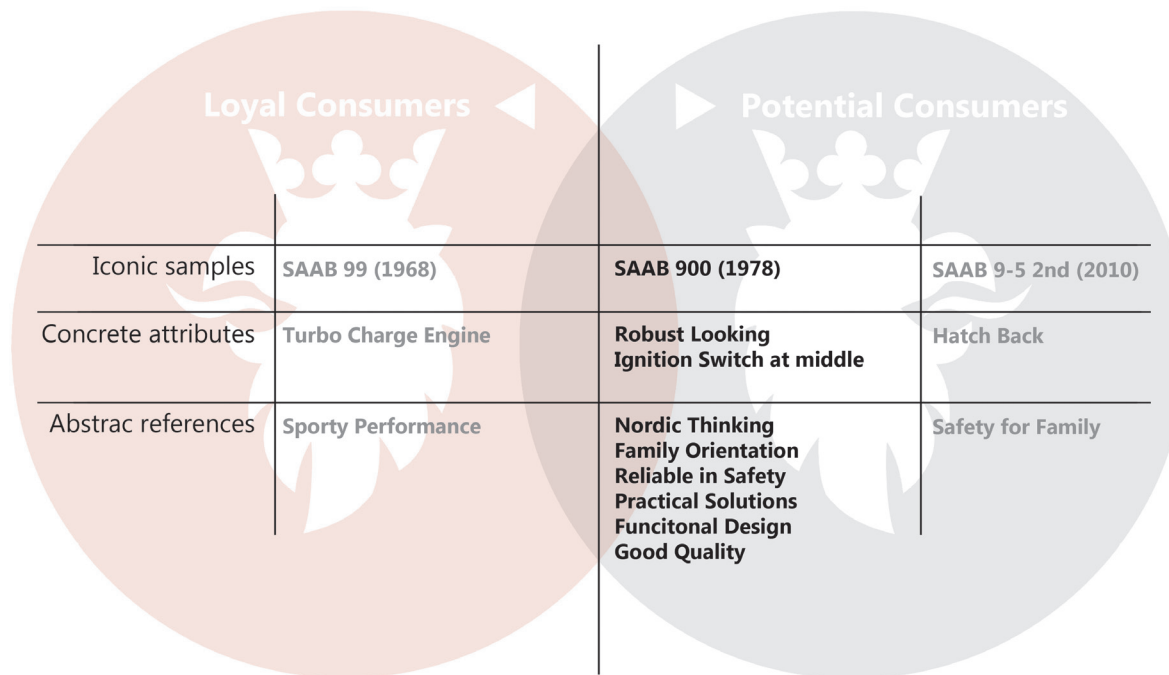
pioneers, its identity as an individualists' choice and an innovation centric brand will be re-established. Still, this could be a now or never moment to define whether or not that Saab could live up to its name. It has lost

almost everything in recent years such as its design legacy, characteristics and reputation.

Nevertheless, Holweg & Oliver declare that it is inarguable that Saab used to be a strong, distinctive brand ^[iii]. "Saab's brand DNA is unique and rooted in its aeronautical heritage, innovative and independent thinking and its Swedish origins ^[iii] p.13." From the GM-Saab history we learned that even though Saab had been misbranded for nearly 15 years, its consumers are still expecting the return to its classic heritage. This evidence highlights the value of Saab's heritage, which had been furthermore verified by all the interviewees in this study.

If NEVS intends to rebuild Saab's reputation by its first model, they should not retrieve too much from the current models. Instead, they should define a new model as the rebirth of the classic 900. Due to the fact that GM had brought disappointment to Saab's consumers for many years, it will be really difficult to restore Saab's reputation by continuously revising GM's models.

Figure 6.1-1



The figure highlights the core values of Saab's brand identity.

Figure 6.1-2

The figure demonstrates the development of the Saab 900 series.



900 Classic (1978)



900 2nd (1994)



9-3 (1998)



9-3 2nd (2002)



9-3 2nd Facelift (2008)

The 900 (1978) has been considered as the best iconic Saab by every type of consumers. (see figure 5.1 at page.31) This evidence indicates that if there is still any chance to bring back Saab's reputation, it should be based around the reboot of the classic 900. The identity of classic 900 could be derived from two aspects: (1) From a visual standpoint, it is distinguished from other competitors by its robust looking and the location of ignition switch. (2) In terms of perception, its specified characteristics are Nordic thinking, family orientation, reliable in safety, practical solutions, functional design and good quality.

As shown in figure 6.1-2, I discuss why the 900 series had felt on updating its design legacy. First, the second generation 900 (1994) is the turning point. It more or less looks like the classic model (1978). However, since then the "robust looking" has been eliminated entirely. The third generation 900 (renamed as 9-3) was introduced in 1998. Comparing with the previous models, there is no obvious change on 9-3. The following model (2002) presents a significant change from the 9-3 1st. From my perspective, it came as an announcement of the end of 900 series; almost no characteristic that is carried from the original model. The 9-3 2nd received a facelift in 2008. Its facial design makes the model looks like a Saab from the front angle; however, its body is still far from the classic models.

It is difficult to state recommendations about the abstract references

of Saab since it has not been further clarified by interviewees. However, based on the previous study, I argue that: We might not be able to define the contents of “Scandinavian heritage” in general; however, it was defined by Saab as “Family orientation”, and “reliable in Safety”. (See chapter 5.3.2 at page.42)

To be more specific, NEVS needs to bring back the classic 900 in a modern form. Since “robust” is recognized as an important style of Saab’s design. The following question then jumps out: How would modern Saab define its robust style?

In my opinion, it will become an advantage of Saab if its “robust style” can be redefined properly. NEVS should consider it for several reasons: First of all, it can distinguish Saab from its natural competitors which are mainly Volvo, Audi and BMW (see figure 5.2 at page.36). Second, it is the best recognized characteristics of Saab. Even though it has been eliminated for a long period of time, a large number of interviewees still look Saab in this way. Third, “robust” is not a common style in nowadays vehicle design. Models with such style are often seen as individualists’ choices which fits Saab’s brand identity.

On the other hand, it is also important to reconnect Saab’s identity with aircraft. In previous study we learned that Saab used to have a strong connection to aviation industry; however, such characteristic has become weaker over years. There is limited information that

explains the meaning of Saab’s features. However, it is noted that (1) the side vents of the grille simulates the fighters’ air intakes, (2) the curving dashboard, (3) night panel and the (4) ignition switch are simulating the fighter’s cabin. Patrick Hanlon argue that

Figure 6.1-3



The figure shows several examples of well-received models with robust style.

"the tag line 'Born from jets' differentiated Saab in a parking lot already filled with automobiles in pursuit of perfection, ultimate driving machines, and cars engineered like no other cars in the world ^[xxi]." However in this study, less than 23% of interviewees has linked Saab to aircraft. In this case, NEVS should also reconsider how to bring back the linkage.

To sum up, Saab still has opportunity to rise again. Tim Urquhart argued that "Saab is a really brilliant brand. It's probably one of the biggest brand mismanagement stories in the history of the automotive industry. Saab could have been the 'Swedish Audi' if it had been taken on in the right way 20 years ago. It's been completely mismanaged, under invested in by people who don't understand what the brand means, and what it has the potential to mean ^{[iii] p.13}." From which it indicates an urgent challenge for NEVS: To rebuild Saab's reputation. In doing so, revising the classic 900 should be considered in first priority; it should have been to Saab as the 911 has been to Porsche ^[xxii].

Figure 6.1-4

The figure highlights the objects that are considered as references of jet fighters.



Figure 6.1-5

"The creator of the Porsche 911 has founded a culture of design in our company that distinguishes our sports cars even today" Porsche CEO Matthias Müller said ^[xxiii].



6.2 Long-term goals: Improving Saab's product portfolio

Holweg & Oliver point out that Saab in its entire history had two fundamental problems. The first was the shortage of products, and the second was its positioning on the automobile market ^[iii]. Saab had only two products in its portfolio, the 900 series starting from 1978 (renamed as 9-3 in 1998) and the 9000 series starting from 1985 (renamed as 9-5 in 1997). Both of which were in market segments that were not growing ^{[iii] p.22}. They also indicate that "Saab was positioned in a niche market, which by definition meant that it would always find it difficult to sell large volumes of vehicles ^{[iii] p.21}." These problems had caught Saab in an "unhappy middle" while its competitors like Audi or BMW could balance their profit by a variety choice from their product portfolio ^[iii]. Knowing these problems, it is necessary to improve Saab's product portfolio.

Although developing a SUV or a sports car may highlight the performance characteristics of Saab, the first extension should focus on ideas that are comparable to Saab's original identity. Based on the conclusion in the previous chapter (see figure 5.4 at page.48) I recommend the following three segments (classified by European classification methods ^[xxiv]) to be developed: (1) D-segment large cars, (2) E-segment executive cars and (3) F-segment luxury cars.

In the earlier discussion, I recommended NEVS that they should focus on redesigning the classic 900 as their short-term goal. This new model will take place of the E-segment executive cars to compete with for examples BMW 5 or Volvo S80.

Figure 6.2-1



The figure exemplifies the recommended segments from BMW's portfolio.

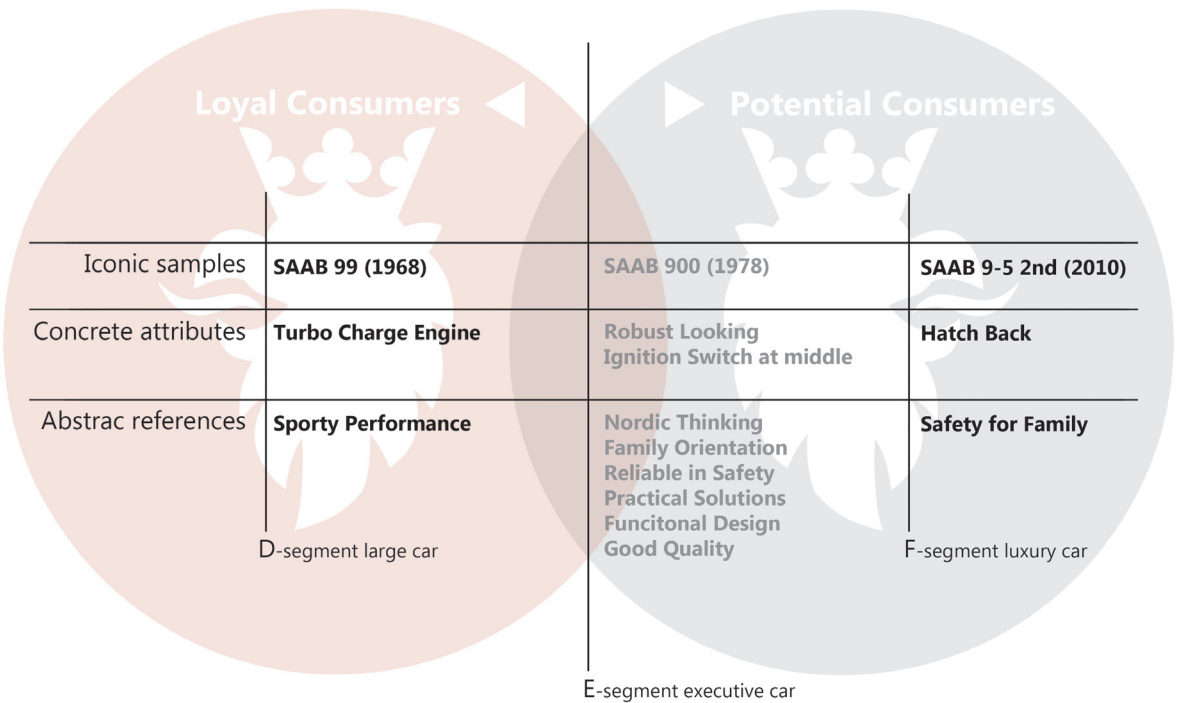
Figure 6.2-2 supports my recommendations for NEVS's long-term goals by highlighting the interests of different markets. For the loyal consumers, the coming models should emphasize on sporty performance. A turbo charged engine is necessary; and should be distinguished from models that target in different market segments. From my point

of view, a 3 doors mid-size coupe which imbedded the design legacy of the 99 (1968) is an ideal model.

For the potential consumers, NEVS can design the new model based on the 9-5 2nd (2010). Saab had a rather long history on developing the F-segment luxury cars (the 1985 Saab 9000 and the 9-5 series starting from 1997). Although the 9-5 2nd (2010) has received both extremely positive and negative comments, it is still considered as one of the iconic models. The hatch back, family oriented design and reliability in terms of safety are the main requests from the potential consumers. Though these characteristics can be found on the 9-5 2nd, a fairly large number of interviewees still do not receive it well.

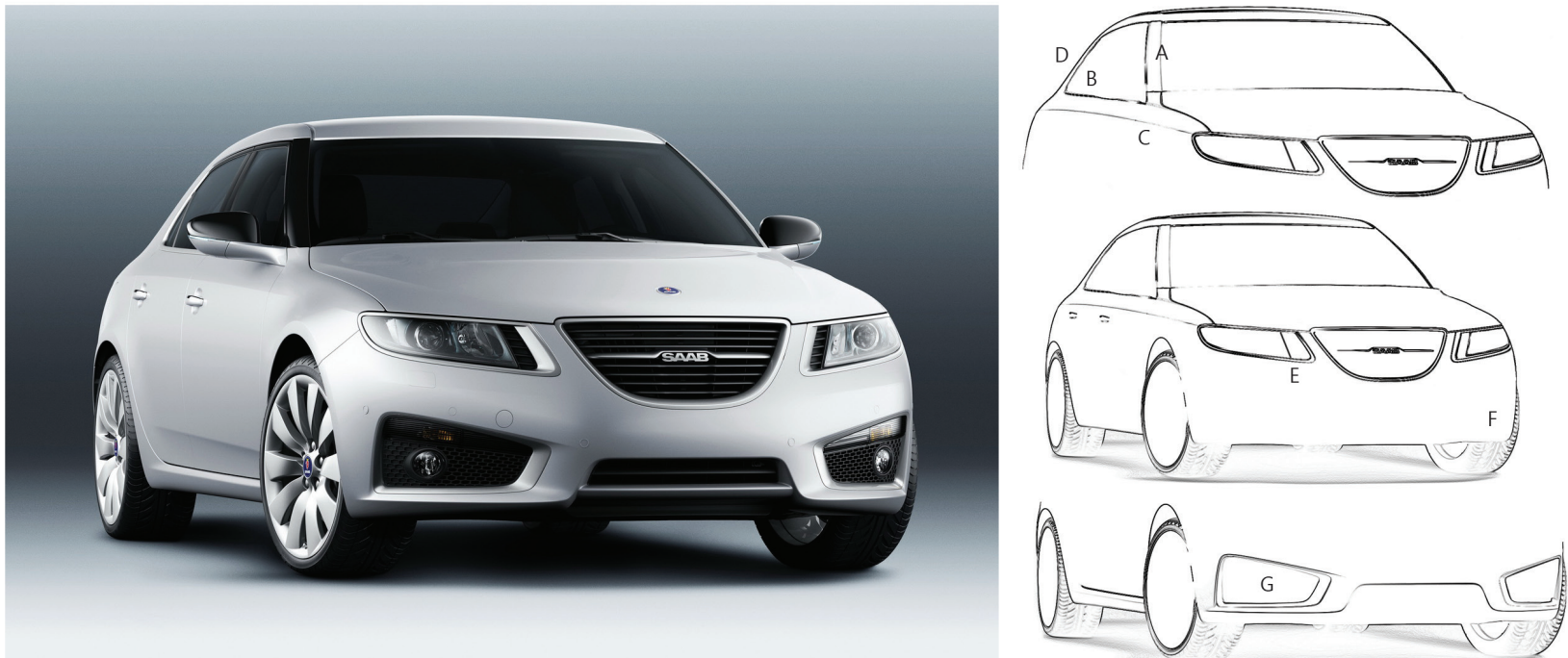
In this case, I conducted a style analysis to the 9-5 2nd. (see figure 6.2-3 at page.53) First of all, looking into the upper part of this model, we can see (A) the big curve of the windshield, (B) hook line to the eye, (C) straight side line from eye to tail and the (D)

Figure 6.2-2



The figure highlights the interests in different market segments. The left part shows the interest of loyal consumers; the right part shows the interests of potential consumers.

Figure 6.2-3



Analyzing the exterior design of Saab 9-5 2nd (2010.)

First of all, look into the upper part of this model, we can see a clear outline of Saab. Next, separate the air vents from the body and look at the whole body. We can now find that the "Saab look" decreases slightly. Finally, look at the entire design, we can see that the impression of Saab drops radically from step 2.

hatch back. From these features, the 9-5 2nd stands with Saab's attitude.

Next, if we separate the air vents from the platform and look at the whole body, we can find that the "Saab look" has decreased slightly. Several possible reasons could be: (E) The grille's side vents are too separate and too small. (F) The lower body design makes the car "clumsy"

Finally, observing the entire design, we can see that the impression of Saab drops radically from step 2. From my point of view, I see "face" as the most important part of a car. In the case of 9-5 2nd, the (G) vents at lower body were over emphasized. They take away the focus point from Saab's original identities which are around the grille. Furthermore, some of its design weaknesses are shown from the grille and the head lamp, from which it is more ambiguity to identify the Saab style.

6.3 Developing electric vehicles in China

Holweg & Oliver claim that: "Historically, Saab's sales had been heavily concentrated in just three markets – its home market of Sweden and the US and UK ^[iii] p.14." In its new market China, Saab is still not a mature brand. In my opinion, it is an opportunity to reestablish its brand reputation. To launch the electric vehicle in China, product positioning is a crucial task for NEVS. There are two fundamental questions that need to be answered: How to charge; and where to charge?

Assumption 1

The new model is positioned as a long distance transportation vehicle.

In this case, NEVS needs to resolve the charging challenges in different cities, on highway and at rural area. If NEVS can establish the infrastructure for electric vehicles in China ahead than other competitors, it will be a great advantage for Saab's future products.

Assumption 2

The new model is positioned as a short distance transportation vehicle.

In this case, the charging problems become smaller because it is easier to develop infrastructure for electric vehicle within a city. Besides the challenges on constructing the needed infrastructure, it seems like a durable opportunity to quickly establish Saab's reputation in China. An idea from Muller could have resolved the challenges of assumption 2: "Where can you find an iconic design [like the 96] which hasn't been put back into production in a modern way? ^[iii] p.14" The retro style of BMW mini and the 500 series of Fiat have come to a great success ^[iii]. These stylish small vehicles fit perfectly to a crowded city. They

require less electricity and is easier to settle the charging facilities in urban area. Therefore, it can benefit to Saab's identity as a pioneer of pure electric vehicles in China.

In doing so, concerning Saab's historical heritage in its natural market, NEVS should pay attention to Saab's natural brand philosophy. Some global brands are strongly associated with their country of origin; such a connection could be a unique selling point in global market, stated by Roellig "A global brand must retain its autonomy while also adhering to local sensitivities ^[xviii]."

In the end of my recommendations, Patric Hallen argue that "a brand that cannot sit across from a buyer and tell them where they're from, what they're about, what identifies them in the market, how they're used, the language they use that surrounds their community, what they're not and never want to become, and who's steering the way—they will ultimately fail ^[xix]." As noted earlier, Saab is a brand that will not easily been replaced by other things. In this case, if NEVS wish to benefit from the name "Saab", they have to aware of what Saab was in its history and what Saab will be in the future.

In summary, (see figure 6.4 at page.56) NEVS should at first establish an iconic model. In doing so, revising the classic 900 is highly recommended. It could help NEVS to rebuild Saab's reputation and restore consumer confidence. The challenge is that the design of the classic 900 is out of date; to be able to compete with its natural competitors, I suggest a competitor analysis to be conducted through Volvo, BMW and Audi.

Once NEVS has successfully revised Saab's brand identity, the following steps to improve Saab's product portfolio and to construct facilities for electrical vehicle will be needed. Considering the technical difficulties on making a pure electric-powered vehicle and its infrastructures, a small urban vehicle would be a good starting point. By developing smaller vehicles, NEVS could assess the market reaction and revise the strategy accordingly. After NEVS has settled the foundation for their electric vehicle, they could then introduce larger and more powerful models.

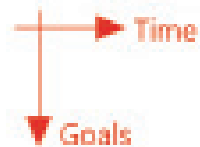
Figure 6.3

BMW mini and Fiat 500 have come to a great success. These small cars are easier to be developed into pure electric vehicles.



New Models	SAAB 9-3	SAAB 9-1	SAAB 9-2	SAAB 9-5
Missions	Reestablish design icon Rebuild brand reputation Restore consumer confidence	Pure electric-powered Easy to charge Advance performance	Extreme sporty performance Advance battery endurance Practical Designs	Family orientation Supreme battery endurance Advance performance
Product Position	High performance family sedan	City transportation	D-segment compact coupe	F-segment luxury sedan
Iconic Samples	SAAB 900 Classic (1978) 	SAAB 96 (1960) 	SAAB 99 (1968) 	SAAB 9-5 2nd (2010) 
Competitors	Volvo S60  BMW 5  Audi S4 	Mercedes Smart  BMW Mini  Fiat 500 	Volvo C30  BMW 3  Audi TT 	Volvo S80  BMW 7  Audi S7 

Figure 6.4



CHAPTER 07 DISCUSSIONS

The objectives of the study reported in this MA thesis are (1) to clarify how the Saab styles are perceived by different stakeholders and (2) to identify the iconic design legacy of Saab, from which NEVS can build future models.

In realizing these objectives, I recruited three groups of interviewees which are Saab designers, Saab fanatics and regular consumers. From the interviews, I tried to discover (1) the iconic Saab models, (2) Saab's competitors and (3) the important heritage of Saab. By comparing the answers between each group, I clarified the core identity of Saab and the different interests of stakeholders.

Saab in its core was a brand that offered safe, practical, functional and family orientation vehicles with high quality. Their products are well-known for its robust looking and the ignition switch at middle. For the loyal consumers, Saab is pleased by its sporty performance. On the other hand, the potential consumers look into its reliability in terms of safety.

Based on these findings, my recommendations for NEVS are: (1) To revise the classic 900 as short-term goal, from which I explained the value of revising the classic 900 and provided a style analysis

of the 900 series. (2) To improve Saab's product portfolio as long term goals, from which I explained the shortage of Saab's marketing strategy and suggested two models to be developed. (3) To resolve the challenges of branding Saab as electric vehicles maker in China, from which I gave two assumptions and suggested the strategy accordingly.

Saab is a strong brand which makes it recognized in a way what it used to be. In restoring Saab's reputation, NEVS has to make sure that "Saabs will be Saabs again ^[iii]p.13" if they wish to benefit from the name.

Limitations and suggestions for future work

In this study, the major challenge is on recruiting interviewees for in-depth research. Because style is perceived differently, it needs a large number of participants in order to make the results more reliable.

To gather qualitative data, I recommend the following interview methods: Face to face, Skype and instance online chatting space (ex.

Face Book). If it is needed to conduct interviews through telephone or online questionnaires, following are my recommendations: (1) In a telephone interview, one should state the questions clear and simple. It is better to ask one question each time. (2) In doing online questionnaire, one should state their questions as clear as possible by giving extra information. Before sending the online questionnaires, it is better to conduct several face to face interviews. In doing so, one could gain better understanding for making qualitative online questionnaires.

Second, the scope of this study is limited geographically. To be able to conduct the research in other markets, it needs financial and social supports. Otherwise, the study could be done in a larger scale and be more specific on target groups. For example, how could the defining Saab's characteristics been specified by different market areas? How could the consumers' backgrounds effective their judgments?

Third, the information of official record about Saab vehicle design is limited. Most publication about Saab's design is written in Swedish which made it difficult in understanding the purpose / meaning of some specific features.

Overall, the thesis (1) identifies the value of Saab heritage and (2) presents a style study by exemplifying how Saab is perceived by insiders and outsiders. Besides the automobile industry, this study could be carried on in a variety of filed. It can help on specifying the value proposition of a business model (see Osterwalder & Pigneur's business model generation ^[xxv]) and clarifying the knowledge gap between decision makers and consumers on design styles.

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Chapter 1

Page 07 **Figure 1.1-1 Saab 96 vs Porsche 996**

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Page 08 **Figure 1.1-2 Saab 900 & Saab 9-3 2nd**

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Page 09 **Figure 1.3 Thesis structure**

Chapter 2

Page 12 **Figure 2.1-1 Saab cars produced between 1948-1968**

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Page 13 **Figure 2.1-2 Comparing Saab cars to airplane**

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Page 14 **Figure 2.2 Saab cars produced between 1968-1989**

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Page 16 **Figure 2.3-1 Saab's sales volume from 1947 to 2007**

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Page 16 **Figure 2.3-2 Saab cars produced between 1989-2000**

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Page 17 **Figure 2.4 Saab cars produced between 2000-2010**

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Page 19 **Figure 2.5-1 Koenigsegg & Spyker**

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Page 20 **Figure 2.5-2 Buick LaCrosse & Saab 9-5 2nd (2010)**

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Page 20 **Figure 2.6 Saab Phoenix**

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Chapter 3

Page 24 **Figure 3.3 Warell's categorization of product functions**

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Chapter 4

Page 28 **Figure 4.1 Interview materials**

Page 29 **Figure 4.2 Analyzing frame work**

Chapter 5

Page 31 **Table 5.1 & Figure 5.1 Overview of selected iconic Saab models and its analysis framework**

Page 33 **Figure 5.1.1-1 Similarities between the 99 (1968) and the 900 (1978)**

- 1 2 1. http://www.mad4wheels.com/webpics/hires/00003928%20-%201968%20Saab%2099/1968_Saab_99_001_4684.jpg
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Page 33 **Figure 5.1.1-2 Common identities between the 99 (1968) and the 900 (1978)**

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Page 34 **Figure 5.1.2 Badged-engineering Saab 9-2X & 9-7X**

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Page 36 **Table 5.2 & Figure 5.2 Overview of selected competitors and its analysis framework**

Page 38 **Table 5.3.1-1 & Figure 5.3.1-1 Overview of selected tangible attributes and its analysis framework**

Page 39 **Figure 5.3.1-2 Saab's ignition switch**
http://www.rsportscars.com/foto/09/Saab9506_inter1600.jpg

Page 39 **Figure 5.3.1-3 Saab's unique exterior design**
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Page 41 **Figure 5.3.1-4 Other important attributes**
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Page 42 **Table 5.3.2 & Figure 5.3.2 Overview of selected abstract references and its analysis framework**

Page 45 **Figure 5.4 Overview of Saab's important heritage**

Chapter 6

Page 47 **Figure 6.1-1 Highlighting Saab's core heritage**

Page 48 **Figure 6.1-2 The development of Saab's 900 series**
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Page 49 **Figure 6.1-3 Collage of robust car styles**
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Page 50 **Figure 6.1-4 Highlighting Saab's aircraft heritage**

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Page 50 **Figure 6.1-5 Porsche 911 classic & the latest model**

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Page 51 **Figure 6.2-1 Example of different car segments**

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Page 52 **Figure 6.2-2 Highlighting the interests in different market segments**

Page 53 **Figure 6.2-3 Analyzing the Saab 9-5 2nd (2010)**

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Page 55 **Figure 6.3 BMW mini & Fiat 500**

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Page 56 **Figure 6.4 Over view of recommendations**

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9 10 11 12
13 14 15 16
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Appendix 1: Questionnaire

(I): Question to the Saab Insiders

(F): Question to the Saab Fanatics

(R): Question to the Regular consumers

1. Could you briefly tell me your background? What aspects on car you were working on? (I)

In general, what does a car mean to you? (F,R)

2. How did you come to know about Saab? (F,R)

What do you like about Saab? (F)

3. Please see the given pictures.

Which Saab's models do you think could well-represent its brand? (I,F,R)

Why do you think so? (I,F,R)

4. Please see the given pictures again.

Which Saab's models do you think had weaken its brand identities? (I,F,R)

Why do you think so? (I,F,R)

5. Who do you think could be Saab's competitors? (I,F,R)

6. How would you describe the Saab style? (I,F,R)

Appendix 2: Participants of interview & questionnaire

- Eero Miettinen (Saab insiders group) 29 November 2012
- Tony Catignani (Saab insiders group) 3 December 2012
- Nilsson Ström Aina (Saab insiders group) 4 December 2012
- Juho Hannus (Saab fanatics group) 5 December 2012
- Mikko Autio (Saab fanatics group) 5 December 2012
- Mikko illi (Regular consumers group) 7 December 2012
- Nicklas Englund (Regular consumers group) 8 December 2012
- Lauri Ahtiainen (Regular consumers group) 13 December 2012
- Antti Kautonen (Saab fanatics group) 15 December 2012

- Teemu Reisbacka (Regular consumers group) 15 December 2012
- Mikko Helin (Saab fanatics group) 25 December 2012
- Kristian Keinänen (Regular consumers group) 29 December 2012
- Antti-Pekka Raitisto (Regular consumers group) 30 December 2012
- Juha Penttinen (Saab fanatics group) 2 January 2013
- Petri Kähkönen (Saab fanatics group) 2 January 2013
- Anonymous (Saab fanatics group) 4 January 2013
- Federley Osse (Regular consumers group) 10 January 2013

Appendix 3: Transcripts of Interview

3.1 Saab Insiders

Which Saab's models do you think could well-represent its brand?

I1: The 92 (1949) was an icon of Saab... its profile, the line around side windows were unique at the time. The 900 (1978) which was carry from the 99 (1968)... combining functionality...hatch back, hook line went over the shoulder on the side until the eyes. I also like the 9-5 2nd (2010), it has strong character that doesn't look like other cars...Beautiful profile.

I2: The 95 (1959) was very handy, very practical. It represented the functional side of Saab (technical and practical features). The 900 (1978) has all the Saab features...the hatch back, short wheel base. Front and rear over hand were very long, the wedge shape very extreme, the hook at the end of wedge... features taken from the 99 (1968)... About the body panel geometry, something sophisticated starting to grow (from 900)... the concavity at the lower part of the side... highlight between wheels. It was also the first model that introduced the mean look (mean eyes)... grille and light in a part. And the 9-5 2nd (2010), it was a complete development of all Saab features... could be a born classic.

I3: The 92 (1949)... striking fluting, aircraft heritage, Facelift thinking into its form... wind screen and the interior. I think the 99 turbo was the number one car that people will remember. It was the first time the turbo was put into standard hatch back car... the INCA wheel. I also like the 9-3 Facelift (2008) and the 9-5 2nd (2010).

Which Saab's models do you think had weaken its brand identities?

I1: I don't like the 9000 (1985), It shared too many parts... I think that Saab jeopardized its reputation by introducing 9-2x and 9-7x (2005). The Saab customers were more sensitive to the origin then car customers in general. The designers did all they could but it is not all about visual appearance.

I2: The 9000 (1985) did not looks like a Saab, but the interior was Saab. I could only recognize it as Saab from the grille, the 3-spoke wheel and the interior... Both 9-2X and 9-7X are examples of GM's desperate badge engineering and miss branding at its worst.

I3: The 9000 (1985)... body packaging collaboration too much with fiat, which controlling the Saab shape... Just the grille in the front can be recognized as Saab.

Who do you think could be Saab's competitors?

I1: In Scandinavia market, it was Volvo. In other Europe area, it was Alfa Romeo or Audi. Comparing Saab with Alfa Romeo, both are similar in driving experience (enjoyable), But Saab was safer and made in higher quality. Comparing Saab with Audi, they were similar on the aspects of quality and safety, but Saab has stronger personality through design (at that time).

I2: Safety and quality was always emphasized by Saab... Saab was always trying to be larger than it used to be. Back to the age of 95 & 96 (the 60's), Saab's competitor was Volvo (544, 700, Amazon). The 900 (1978) had lift Saab to a different market, competed with BMW 3 series or small Mercedes. The 9000 (1985) was defined to be the same class as BMW 5 series or Audi 6, but it didn't reach the goal until the arrival of 9-5 2nd (2010).

I3: Volvo. They were both functional practical. The "safety" feature was shouted very loud by Volvo but Saab is equally the same, and Saab was more emphasize on sporty. In the 90's, Saab had more style and character...soul...passion, it was ahead to Volvo in being brave in the look.

How would you describe the Saab style?

I1: Back to the age of Saab 92 (1949) to 99 (1968), Saab had its unique style considering how other cars looked at the time... personality... Connection to aircraft, the cars looked very Facelift dynamic, high performing in harsh climate and safe. The organization focused very much on functionality, innovation... practical solution. I saw Saab as both a family car and fun to drive. In the past Saab was a rally car and it was that which built the image.

I2: The design was odd (but I like it)... Innovative, relative to safety, Nordic, Arctic condition, comfort. Its attitude on technical solutions made it different from other brands.

I3: Understated, Scandinavian style (functional with the minimal), sculptural look, emphasize on function more than the form. The key at the central panel... Big company (GM) tried to combine part between different models, but it actually destroyed companies (including Saab)...In my opinion Saab bridges the gap on being a family car and sporty fun driving; it might be that it is slightly less family. They (Saab) lost the spirit when starting to build the Salon car (should focus in hatch back and sporty cars).

3.2 Saab Fanatics

In general, what does a car mean to you?

Fanatic 1 (F1): A car is not just transport for me, but a necessity for my person. I love a car as a piece of engineering, as a well-executed object... something personalized... It's an extension of one's personality, so it can be said I live through my car.

Fanatic 2 (F2): Car as transportation is at the basic level. It is a hobby, a passion... I like fixing car, taking care of them, and driving them.

Fanatic 3 (F3): Cars to me are not a machine from A to B. It is something I enjoy...beautiful result of mechani-

cal engineering.

Fanatic 4 (F4): To me, a personal car means freedom. I can take it and go wherever I want, whenever I want. Generally speaking, a car is not just any car to me. It's more than just a vehicle that takes me from A to B. For me, a car is a friend.

Fanatic 5 (F5): A car is a method of transportation. Living in the rural area, a car is something that I need: not just a choice.

Fanatic 6 (F6): Raised in the countryside without proper public transportation, car means primarily an important form of transportation to me. But a car is more than that to me; it is a way of expressing one self and it is also one kind of a remembrance item to save (maybe for later generations). For example, my dad owns a year 1924 model T Ford which he inherited from his late father. And I own a 1972 Mercedes inherited from my mother's late father. At the moment I own 8 cars, 6 of them are Saabs, new and old.

Fanatics 7 (F7): Most comfortable and fastest way of moving around.

How did you come to know about Saab? What do you like about Saab?

F1: I guess I've known them for all my life. I used to go to car dealerships with my father on Sundays and he was good friends with the Saab dealer in my town. Saab has always had a significant presence in Finland (the old police cars were always Saab).

For me, Saab is always a family car first, but enough fun to keep the driver happy... and they've concentrated on power as well, even if handling has sometimes been less important... It is a combination of the solidity of Nordic engineering and Nordic solutions, but with certain strangeness in a good way. Saab has always wanted to do things its own way; sometimes that has meant building cars for years and years the same way, even if the competition has changed (the

99 came out in 1968 and it was pretty much the same thing still in 1983 and the basic structure was the same as the 900). I also like the interior in Saabs, materials that feel good and ergonomics designed for the Nordic driver (large buttons you can press with gloves in hands, the black panel that makes driving easier in the dark). The Nordic winter has been a big inspiration in Saab design, I believe, and crash safety (I think Saab is the only manufacturer that has considered moose damage in the crash safety engineering process, the windshield surround is strengthened so if you hit a moose (elk), it will not crush easily). The other thing is the night panel feature, which makes driving in the night or in the dark easier. The instrument cluster goes dark except for the speedometer so it's easier for the eyes; and if you're running out of fuel, the fuel gauge lights up and so on. (My BMW has black panel too: it has an electrical problem that makes the dashboard go dark suddenly, but it's not meant to do that).

F2: My father has 2 Saabs (99, 900 1st) and my mother and I has 9-3 2nd (2002). I think it's made by engineers for engineers (easy to fix, powerful...technical aspect)

F3: The first Saab I knew was the 9000 (1985). Every holiday I was sitting in Saab. Saabs seats were very good... Concentrate to driver (control stuff)... Night panel button (feature from aircraft)... Reference from air plane history... First turbo charge engine.

F4: I was born to a family of Saab enthusiasts. My grandfather (Saab 99, 900 and 9-3) and father (all Saab models) drove Saab, as well as my mother. My first touch with Saab was when I was taken home from birth hospital in a yellow Saab 96.

Saab is not a car for the masses. It is different enough from stable brands, such as Nissan, as well as from more luxurious European brands Mercedes and BMW. It's a car for "auto-individualists". The value of Saab comes from its safety and coziness. It's made for the challenging Nordic weather circumstances.

F5: Everyone in Finland who's even close to my age

(45) knows about Saabs: they've been a common sight in Finnish roads due to manufacturing in Uusikaupunki. I "knew" that Saabs were incredibly expensive and consumed vast amounts of fuel. But when I got tired of the lower back pain I suffered every time after a few hours' drive on my Toyota, I decided to look for a car where ergonomics would suit better for a person of my size (192 cm/110 kg). I decided to test drive a 9-3 SC. Once in the driver's seat, I knew this was it. After a test drive, I was even more impressed: the performance was way, way beyond my Corolla. (Not that the performance had been an issue to me before, but apparently you don't miss something you don't know even exists.) Roughly two years ago we needed a 2nd car in our family and actually it was my wife who said it needs to be a Saab. And so it was: a 9-5 this time.

I like the looks of Saab and the fact that it is a driver's car. Everything in the cabin is easily available for the driver. I like the fact that I drive a car that is even slightly different from the grey mass of Skodas and Toyotas. I like the quirks that make Saab a Saab: ignition key in the middle, for example. My absolute favorite quirk is the "drain" below the glove box: when using an extra interior heater during the winter, you can neatly guide the chord using that drain. An extra bend in the plastics costs basically nothing for a car manufacturer, but someone needs to first come up with the idea that, hey, if I use an extra interior heater, how could I get rid of the chord running loose on the floor.

The best part of Saab to me is nevertheless the community around it. I have met a lot of amazing people and made many friends while owning a Saab. It is incredible how loyal and united the community is for this brand.

F6: In the seventies, when I was born, and also in the eighties, Saabs were very popular in Finland. My father was then working as an after sales manager in the Saab organization, and naturally drove a company-owned 900, always the newest model year. Also some of my relatives drove Saabs.

(I like its) quality, looks, performance, safety, intelligent solutions and innovations, being a Finnish-made or a Nordic product with a Nordic philosophy. They are well-made, robust and lasting cars which are fun to drive but still practical.

F7: I known it always; used to have problems with Volvo in the winter, so I decided to try Saab. I like its turbo engines, performance, style, looks, winter capabilities.

Which Saab's models do you think could well-represent its brand?

F1: The 900 (1978) which is the classic shape, and developed for the longest. The newer ones carry details and design features from that, but on a different platform... It has the engine the "wrong way around". If you think of a car's engine, the belts are in the front usually or to the side. The 900 has them in the back, between the engine and the windshield just because the engine is an old design and that's the way they could fit it in the car... I also value the 9000 (1985) a lot since it was an attempt to break free from the 900 form. It (9000) was a serious attempt to address the 900's shortcomings... wanted to offer more space and stronger engines (the 9-5 2nd (2010) are a logical development of the 9000, in a way)... They (900 & 9000) were made before the General Motors time which ultimately caused Saab to move to GM parts and platforms. Funny thing is, I really liked the 900 2nd (1996) I drove, which is a GM car... the interior was still a good place to sit in, and it felt "right" (as a Saab). The 9-5 2nd (2010) was a good car, but it arrived too late. The car was pretty much perfect; there were a real good amount of "Saabness" inside (special interior with a lot of interesting features: the instrument panel shape and the dashboard are very space-age).

F2: The 96 (1960), 299 (1968), 3900 (1978), 49-3 2nd (2002). The 900 was easy to tune up, and design in good shape. They were all suit for Finnish weather (front wheel drive).

F3: The 96 (1960), first car which made Saab famous, 4 engine, front wheel drive (good for winter), warm in winter. 2900 (1978) which was came from 99; was a really first sporty Saab.

F4: The 9000 (1985): It was the best Saab model of all time. The interior was exceptionally spacious and modern. It was a real joy to drive and compact in size. Even today it is a very nice car to drive, even though the design has dated. There were options of engine size and type to choose for every driver. The 96 (1960): It has character. It's the last of the old generation Saabs (92, 93, 96 models), as it combines all the good features of the aforementioned models. The 99 (1968): It created the design features characteristic with Saab and later Saab models. (Such as the ignition lock located between front seats and profile of the car with more rectangular windows and flat roof). Maybe the most important thing with Saab 99 is that Saab introduced its first Turbo charged engine that became a success.

F5: The bubble-shaped 96 (1960) is an icon, but as you don't see those much anymore, younger generation probably doesn't even recognize that. To me, however, that is one of the true Saabs, nicely showing appreciation of the heritage of 92. 2The 99's onwards there has been a recognizable line of Saab-design in all the models. Look at the silhouettes of each: even though the car changes and develops, there's still same brand image in all of them. This is something that I appreciate.

F6: 196 (1960): The final and most advanced incarnation of the original, airplane-wing-form Saabs. Classic and robust, a car with unique looks and capability to cope even in severe winter conditions. 2 The 900 (1978): Also a very advanced, classic, clever and robust Saab. Engine technology in the turbo and 16-valve models was 10 or 20 years ahead of competitors. 3The 9-3 (1998): The looks of classic 900 successfully updated into a modern and more streamlined style. Also the model contains the advantages of both traditional Saab-technology and GM technology; a more balanced product than 900 2nd. It was the last Saab

model with the classic Saab-invented combi-coupe concept (which has now been adopted by Porsche in the Panamera and by Audi in its 5-door coupes).

F7: The 9-5 2nd (2010): Excellent car, best Saab ever but it came too late and the situation of the company ruined sales. The 900 (1978): First real premium Saab, rigid, excellent to drive, lots of personality and performance, turbos.

Which Saab's models do you think had weaken its brand identities?

F1: I think every Saab represents the brand a lot, but the facelift 9-5 (2006) is probably the worst. It shows there was no funding to develop the car any further. I'm happy with the profile of 9-5 (1997), but then they ruined it with an ugly design that didn't improve the rest of the car at all. About the 9-2x and the 9-7x, I like the idea because it's so weird, but it's far from a real Saab.

F2: The 9-2x (2005) which had no Saab features. The 9-4x (did not show on the market), it just looked like a jeep behind. The 9-5 2nd (2010) did not look like a Saab anyway.

F3: The 9-2x (2005) which was so GM, the whole car was a Subaru. The 9-5 2nd (2010) which was an Opel insignia (Opel like car).

F4: I don't think there is any. I think it's due to Saab being rather small company. Therefore they had to make all their models to meet the core values of the brand (to make a safe car for the Nordic market). They didn't make so-called entry level products to satisfy the customer of mass brands. Instead, they focused on making real Saabs, that evolved but always without compromising on quality.

F5: The badge-branded ones: 9-7x and 9-2x (Subaru). I used to think 9000's were also a bit non-Saabish, but apparently I've gotten used to them now.

F6: 9-7x and 9-2x. I don't consider them as real Saabs.

F7: The Chevrolet trailblazer 9-7x and the Subaru Impreza 9-2x.

Who do you think could be Saab's competitors?

F1: I think the biggest competitor or comparable car has always been Volvo (in the Nordic at least), even if the cars have always been completely different. In North America, I think Saab was seen as a competitor for BMW and Mercedes-Benz (a premium product for architects and managers). Saab was so different from an ordinary American car, and was marketed as the car for the individualist. On the other hand, Saab hasn't necessarily been only a premium car in northern Europe, but a normal, everyday car... not cheap, but seen everywhere.

F2: First comes Volvo, but they don't have turbo charge engine... like an everyday car. Saab owner were quite enthusiasm about their own car. Recently, Volvo going to what Saab was to be (more stylish and more sporty).

F3: The 96 vs. Volvo PV / The 900 classic vs. BMW.

F4: It is Volvo, especially in Nordic countries. It makes cars with similar features. The value of the car is based on safety and steady performance. Volvo can be viewed as a "big brother" for Saab, as it is a bigger factory with bigger resources. Others could be Mercedes, BMW and Audi. Especially in the 90's these brands competed with Saab, as they all had models with similar features and target markets. They are all in the same price point of upper mid-market.

F5: Volvo's share some of that same ideology in the cabin, but somehow I still see them as boxes. VAG cars (Audi, VW, Skoda...) are competitors to Saabs especially now since Saabs are no longer (or hopefully: not yet) manufactured. To me Japanese/Korean cars represent something so different that I can't compare

them to Saabs. This is not to say they are not great cars, quite the opposite! But there's still something that is missing from them. And as for the French cars; as the saying goes in Saab-foorumi: "Ranskalaisia ostetaan vain grilleiltä" (One buys French [fries] only from a grille).

F6: There were many competitors and they were different from each other. But to name one, I would name Audi. At least here in Finland, and especially in 900/9-3 size class. There are similarities between Audi and Saab in philosophy, technology, client profiles, company history and so on. Perhaps the biggest difference was that; for Audi, co-operation within the Volkswagen group has seemed quite seamless and has been very successful. Saab and GM did not succeed to co-operate so successfully.

F7: Volvo, Audi, Jaguar, Mercedes, BMW, Lexus. I think they offer cars in the same quality, size and price groups, and all of them have a distinctive personality like Saab does. Volvo and Audi are closest, although they have a broader choice of models in different size groups than Saab.

How would you describe the Saab style?

F1: The Saab style is something that relates to safe choices, but combined to power and individuality (I think of somebody standing on a Swedish beach in the autumn, wearing something made out of wool). Saab made turbo engines an everyday thing, not just a premium-car choice. For example, my perfect Saab would be a 1980s 900 turbo with leather seats and a rear spoiler. I tried a lot of 9000, but I didn't like them as much (I like the design, but I didn't like the driving). I think it (9000) was a very handsome car with good proportions, and I like the seats a lot as well.

F2: It was Engineers made for engineers... emphasizing on technical aspect. For example: If you look at the manual, it has specific instruction for any situation. However, if you look at a Mercedes manual, it might just say: contact the closer dealer.

F3: The Rough style like 900 (1978), and other small details like the hood was open in front way.

F4: It has more personality than many of its competitors, without being too special (unlike Citroen, which cannot be considered "a car for all"). Saab is stylish, safe and powerful. It's also sustainable both design and environmentally-wise, mainly due to its Turbo engine that provides the benefits of a bigger engine with lesser amount of gasoline.

F5: Scandinavian. Clear recognizable...In my opinion Saab is a good combination of different aspects (family, fun to drive, etc.). My 9-3 SC and 9-5 SC are both basically good family cars with spacious booths. But they are also fun to drive (especially since both have been a bit tuned). Of course Saabs are not supercars and compared to them performance is a joke. But look at the price tag and then try to figure out how you put a family with two dogs in a Testarossa.

F6: Smart, no-nonsense, Nordic, practical. As it has been said: Form follows function, not the other way.

F7: Personal style. The line from the bonnet to the rear window like it was in 99 and 900, and the curving windscreen and shell-like bonnet.

The Regular consumer

3.3 Regular Consumers

In general, what does a car mean to you?

Participant 1 (R1): A car means of transport for me, my family and objects under the size of a washing machine.

Participant 2 (R2): First is the basic function transportation; but more importantly, I like to drive a car. I could own one, not necessary to drive it... Pushing yourself to the limit how good you can adjust on the machine (make it better, faster). Some dangerous might be, but that's where the fun is.

Participant 3 (R3): At the moment: functional transportation (for stuff, for go to somewhere). I was driving a van as carrier; therefore, I look to how good of a car is on transport, safety, car with too much electronic could shut down easily in winter.

Participant 4 (R4): Transportation, meaning of life.

Participant 5 (R5): Tool to get from A to B. Not so into car.

Participant 6 (R6): Mainly transportation, but it is also part of one's personality (can be some way compared to clothes).

Participant 7 (R7): Vehicle in which to move around.

How did you come to know about Saab?

R1: My family had a Saab when I was a kid. Saab is secure and easy to maintain. The heating system is designed for Nordic climate and the car also starts even if it is cold outside.

R2: I came to know about Saab from reading car magazine (reading for all my life). My grand pa had a 900 (1978) Facelift. Saab was brave on doing something special.

R3: My grand pa & mom had a Saab 96 (1960)... Grandpa upgrade to 900 turbo, it was a powerful car (police used them as well), an appreciate car with good engine. I like the safety feature (probably the safest) for as a family car, really reliable.

R4: My neighbor had a Saab (900 maybe). I was wondering why the key was at the middle.

R5: I saw Saab running around (at some point might be quite popular). I can recognize very classic models when I was a child.

R6: I don't remember (one of the first car brands I heard).

R7: Several friends have Saab. All Finnish men of my age knew the Saab. It's got the status of a family car. I had a Saab 99. It was safe car (Noisy and slow but safe).

Which Saab's models do you think could well-represent its brand?

R1: The 96 (1960): It is a design icon of its era. Very versatile (multi functional/ practical) car, which has been used in many roles ranging from racing to family use. Simple structures and usability. I have always liked the design. I'd be happy to own one. The 99 (1968): It is the first in line with hints of the "Saab -look", that the brand still has as the base for its designs. The 900 (1978): It was the first "modern" Saab. My girlfriend's family had one in the 80's -90's. It is one of the first cars I have driven.

R2: The 900 (1978): It had a long production time. Finnish police used to drive it... First with turbo charge engine...Saab shape...extremely 80's look (robust)...a good family car. The 9000 (1985): It did really well on functional, rather big, and comfortable...See the Hatch back version, like a German's car (which I like it), good for traveling long distance and in high speed. The 96 (1960): Similar shape as 93, first brought the brand on the road. You see the shape and know its Saab. The 95 2nd (2010): I like the shape (represent Saab pretty well). It has all the basic function for Saab...powerful engine...Could become a great car.

R3: The 9-5 1st (1997) and the 9-3 1st (1998) coupe type of car. They transportation the categories to the coming models; after that, everything more rounded. I remember the Key hole which was next to the hand break... and the wheels (the 3-spoke wheel). I also value many on 39-3 Facelift (2008) and the 49-5 2nd (2010). I like the style (9-5 2nd looks stylish)

R4: The 900 (1978): It looks so basic Swedish. The 9-3 Facelift (2008): It tried to reference from the history.

R5: The 900 (1978) is probably the most recognizable

Saab, especially the hatch back (character going to other models). The 92 (1949): Its shape was unique, highly recognizable. The 9-5 2nd (2010): I could recognize from magazine (the hatch back).

R6: The 900 (1978): This is how it looked when I was a kid. The 96 (1960): It was a classic Saab. It was in several TV shows when I was a kid.

R7: Models from 9000 (1985) to 9-5 2nd (2010). Possibly they seem a little heavy. Saab has always seemed a bit heavy and clumsy.

Which Saab's models do you think had weaken its brand identities?

R1: The 9-5 2nd: It looks like a Mazda or any other car from Asia. The horizontal hood line and some elements of the grille seem to be some of the only elements that are still there. The 95 (1959): It looks too different overall from the other models, but the side lines are close to the other old models. The front side window is the same.

R2: The 9-7x (2005): Only the logo is Saab. The 9-2x (2005): Subaru is a bit like Saab from Japanese point of view (from the aspect on how they made car). The 900 2nd (1994): It wasn't very safe...Structure inside is from Opel.

R3: The 92 (1949) and 95 (1959): They were too old (My Saab thinking from 96). The 9-2x looks like a Subaru. The 9-7x: The SUV thing didn't like Saab.

R4: The 9-5 2nd (2010): It doesn't look like Saab. The 9-2x and the 9-7x (2005): They look like Subaru.

R5: The 9-3 Facelift (2008): It could be pretty much like everything. The 9-7x (2005): American style, it is a different type compare with usual Saab. The 900 2nd (1994): It was similar to any other "that age" design.

R6: The 9000 (1985): There are no similar shapes as a Saab... It is ugly.

R7: The 900 (1978): It was the heaviest Saab, and the back looks ugly.

Who do you think could be Saab's competitors?

R1: Generally is Volvo. The 96 (1960) could compete with Renault 4. The 99 (1968) could compete with 80's Opel. The 900 (1978) could compete with Volvo's of the 80's and 90's.

R2: I'd say Volvo (for being another Swedish), then maybe German premium segment competitors (BMW, Audi, Mercedes-Benz mainly). Lexus? They're maybe the "default choice" in the USA, but in European market Lexus is pretty individual choice. Alfa Romeo and Subaru are other a bit individual choices, but Alfa Romeo is maybe too much passion over sensibility to be a direct rival. Subaru on the other hand could be competitor.

Interesting thing about Saab is, that in the USA it has always been considered as a premium brand, while in the 80s Finland (time when they were also made in Finland) they were considered as totally normal family cars.

R3: Volvo drive the same market segmentation as Saab (safety, family).

R4: Japanese brand...generally cheaper... they tried to be a higher level brand but failed (before GM).

R5: Maybe Mercedes but lower price; they are both in good quality.

R6: Volvo. They have the same target group.

R7: Japanese and German cars (Prize & Quality).

How would you describe the Saab style?

R1: The "Daddy -style"... suit for family – very much

R2: Saab as core is family car. At some sense...German car (Somebody appreciate design, but practical will get Saab). Looks are one thing that defines a Saab. It doesn't have to be as beautiful as Alfa Romeo, but has its own character: practical, Scandinavia sensibility (safe, comfortable, and great view for passengers [make your daily life better]).

They have their own unique approach on making car, making something differently...Strong emphasize on safety...Turbo charge engine...Button that shut down the light from less use stuff on panel, Key hole in the middle...Little detail construct Saab (the personality of the brand) which make your average transportation safer and relaxing.

R3: Really Junky (heavy style...looks heavy), but the interior design has its style, safety (interior are all round...so if you hit by the interior, you won't get hurt)

Saab Participants are most likely stubborn, not social people at all... with some kind of Saab attitude. Owner of Saab may be proud of they have a safe & reliable & functionality car (engineer most likely) instead of proud of its brand.

R4: I can't tell the style. It was first like Nordic, then try to position to higher end (but fail). Quite Finnish car...I think those whose father have a Saab might be willing to buy a Saab (they can only keep the old customer, but fail on attracting new)

R5: Saab more likely are family cars... emphasize on safety. Never associate to fun car (though new model make it somewhat like fun)

R6: Scandinavian, modern, and unique, many of them have been made in Finland. It has a good and a bit humoristic brand... a family car.

R7: Upper middle-class cars.